"The honest investigator must be prepared to follow wherever the search of truth may lead. Truth is often found in the most unexpected places. He must, with fearless and open mind insist that facts are far more important than any cherished, mistaken beliefs, no matter how unpleasant the facts or how delightful the beliefs."

Hugh B. Brown – General Conference, October 1962

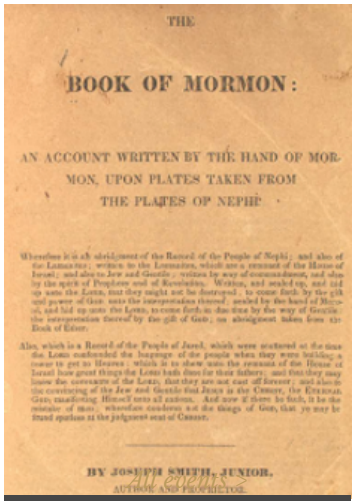
THE LETTER

PART 1

THE EARLY CHURCH

- PREFACE
- INTRODUCTION
- 1. THE FIRST VISION

PART 2


THE
BOOK OF MORMON:
AN ACCOUNT WRITTEN BY THE HAND OF MOR-
MON, UPON PLATES TAKEN FROM
THE PLATES OF NEPHI
BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR,

THE BOOK OF MORMON

- 11. DNA
- 12. REFORMED EGYPTIAN
- 13. ANACHRONISMS

PART 3

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

- 17. THE ROSETTA STONE
- 18. FACSIMILE #1
- 19. FACSIMILE #2

PART 4

THE MODERN CHURCH

- 23. TITHING
- CHURCH SPENDING
- SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Top

2. THE TRANSLATION
3. THE WITNESSES
4. THE KINDERHOOK PLATES
5. THE WORD OF WISDOM
6. THE ENDOWMENT
7. POLYGAMY
8. RACE AND THE CHURCH
9. BLOOD ATONEMENT
10. PROPHESIES
14. THE JAREDITES
15. SOURCE MATERIAL
16. EXPERT VIEWS
20. FACSIMILE #3
21. THE TRANSLATION
22. EXPERT VIEWS
CONCLUSION

PREFACE

My Love,

I am writing this letter to explain in detail how I came to the conclusion that the Church is not all it claims to be. I long for your understanding and support. You are my whole world.

I have been known to get intellectually excited about various subjects on occasion. I tend to investigate every piece of information and exhaust all resources to satisfy my curiosity. One day I came across an Ensign article discussing the new Joseph Smith Papers project that caused my curiosity to extend into Church history. I soon became captivated. I began reading every Church-approved historical resource I could find. I pored over Joseph Smith's journals, the Journal of Discourses, The History of the Church and early Mormon periodicals. It was all so fascinating. My intent was to learn more about the history and to strengthen my testimony, but every so often I would run across well-known events that did not match the narrative I was taught growing up in the Church. This letter is a collection of these events and other inconsistencies.

I would like to address something before you continue reading. Much of this information will be new to you, it was to me. It may feel uncomfortable learning things we were never taught in church. We have been told that this feeling is the Spirit warning us; but please consider that any information that seriously challenges our worldview will make us feel this way. My only request is that you read this with an open mind about the possibility that anything is possible in this crazy world.

Introduction

Church Historian, Elder Steven E. Snow, was interviewed by BYU's Religious Educator p

Top

bout the Church's recent increasing openness with regard to history. He stated,

> "My view is that being open about our history solves a whole lot more problems than it creates. We might not have all the answers, but if we are open – and we now have pretty remarkable transparency – then I think in the long run that will serve us well. I think in the past there was a tendency to keep a lot of the records closed or at least not give access to information. But the world has changed in the last generation—with the access to information on the Internet, we can't continue that pattern; I think we need to continue to be more open."
>
> Steven E. Snow – Start With Faith: A Conversation with Elder Steven E.Snow, Religious Educator 14, no.3

What pattern can't they continue? During an interview with BYU Professor of History, D Michael Quinn, Elder Boyd K. Packer stated,

> "I have a hard time with historians because they idolize the truth. The truth is not uplifting; it destroys… Historians should tell only that part of the truth that is inspiring and uplifting."
>
> Boyd K. Packer – D. Michael Quinn, Pillars of My Faith, Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 19, 1994

Elder Packer counsels that not all truth should be shared, but what determines which should be shared and which should be censored? At what point do partial truths become lies? Elder Packer's caution and Elder Snow's reveal shows that the brethren have regularly suppressed information about the Church's troublesome history. Yet now they see the need to finally be truthful due to the Internet's free flow of information. I feel that a true church should not have a troublesome past to hide and be open to full disclosure if there is any.

Let's take a closer look at what Elder Snow says have been kept closed all these years.

PART 1
THE EARLY CHURCH

Chapter 1
The First Vision

Top

President Gordon B. Hinckley rests the entire truthfulness of the Church of Jesus Christ of L Saints on the validity of

the First Vision when he stated,

> "Our whole strength rests on the validity of that [First] vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens"
>
> Gordon B. Hinckley – The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith, General Conference, October 2002

When studying the circumstances surrounding the First Vision, issues arise that are not taught to members of the Church. These issues involve the timeline, common First Vision-like accounts, Joseph's contradictory accounts, contemporary statements, discrepancies with the official version, and continued concealment.

Timeline

Joseph Smith claimed to have experienced the First Vision in 1820, yet there appears to be no record before 1832. The Church confirms this fact when it states,

> "The oldest account, written in 1832, was part of an autobiography. This account emphasized Joseph's quest for religious truth and his desire to be forgiven of his sins. Therein, Joseph stated that the Lord said to him, "Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee."
>
> LDS.org/topics/first-vision-accounts.

If this event occurred in 1820, then it was 12 years later when Joseph decided to first make a record of it; 2 years after the organization of the Church.

No contemporary periodicals in the 1830s mention Joseph Smith, none of the publications of the Church in that decade, and no journal or correspondence from that time mention the story of the First Vision.

Former Church Historian James B. Allen acknowledged that the story of the First Vision was not known in the 1830s. Elder Allen stated that in the 1830s "the general membership of the Church knew little, if anything, about it." (Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Autumn 1966) According to the historical record, there is no reference to the First Vision as we know it, in any published material in the 1830s.

In 1830 the Church first published The Book of Commandments, a predecessor to the Doctrine and Covenants. It was a collection of Joseph's revelations that had been appearing periodically in the Evening and Morning Star. Five years later the Church decided to add to the Book of Commandments a series of lectures that Joseph prepared for teaching in the School of the Prophets. Joseph's Lectures on Faith were known as the 'Doctrine', and his revelations as the 'Covenants', thus the name of the book was changed to the Doctrine and Covenants. Outlined in these lectures were the doctrine and theology of the Church up to that point, yet they did not mention Joseph's First Vision, even though he speaks extensively on the nature of God. Nor do the pages of the Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate, printed in Kirtland by Oliver Cowdery.

Top

The first missionary pamphlet of the Church was A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, the first edition was published in 1837 by apostle Parley P. Pratt. The book contains long sections on items important to missionaries of the 1830's, such as fulfillment of prophecy, the Book of Mormon, the resurrection, and the nature of revelation, but again, nothing on the First Vision.

The story of the First Vision was not printed in the 1830s. What would later become the official account of the First Vision wasn't printed until 1842. For over 20 years there are no records of transcribed sermons by Joseph or the other elders of the Church, no personal journal entries by any of Joseph Smith's family or followers, and no LDS periodicals describing this historic event as we've come to know it. Before its first publication, none of the more than 16,000 members of the Church ever recorded hearing about it. From all this it would appear that the general membership did not receive any information about the First Vision until the 1840's.

Common First Vision-Like Accounts

Several religious publications in the New England area demonstrate that such visions were common during the early Church.

1. Norris Stearns published his own vision in Greenfield, Massachusetts in 1815; not far from where the Joseph Smith Senior family lived in Vermont.

> "At length, as I lay apparently upon the brink of eternal woe, seeing nothing but death before me, suddenly there came a sweet flow of the love of God to my soul, which gradually increased. At the same time, there appeared a small gleam of light in the room, above the brightness of the sun, then at his meridian, which grew brighter and brighter... At length, being in an ecstasy of joy, I turned to the other side of the bed, (whether in the body or out I cannot tell, God knoweth) there I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first sight. But if I had the tongue of an Angel I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of Fire, and his body, as it had been a Pillar and a Cloud. In looking steadfastly to discern features, could see none, but a small glimpse would appear in some other place. Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man—His face was not ablaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father's will appeared to be his! All was condescension, peace, and love!"
>
> Norris Stearns – The Religious Experience Of Norris Stearns, 1815

2. Minister Elias Smith published a book in which he told of his conversion in 1816.

> "I went into the woods … a light appeared from heaven … My mind seem ise in that light to the

Top

throne of God and the Lamb … The Lamb once slain appeared to my understanding, and while viewing him, I felt such love to him as I never felt to anything earthly … It is not possible for me to tell how long I remained in that situation."

Elias Smith – The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith, 1816

3. Asa Wild claimed to have a revelation that was published on October 22, 1823.

"It seemed as if my mind … was struck motionless, as well as into nothing, before the awful and glorious majesty of the Great Jehovah. He then spake … He also told me, that every denomination of professing Christians had become extremely corrupt"

Asa Wild – Wayne Sentinel,1823. https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/6482/6131

4. Billy Hibbard, a New York preacher, published his memoirs in 1825 and included an experience with meeting Jesus and God the Father when was a young boy.

"…when I came to the place of prayer, had kneeled down and closed my eyes, with my hands uplifted toward the heavens, I saw Jesus Christ at the right hand of God looking down upon me, and God the Father looking upon him. The look of Jesus on me removed the burden of my sins, while he spoke these words, "Be faithful unto death and this shall be thy place of rest."

Billy Hibbard – Memoirs of the Life and Travels of B. Hibbard: Minister of the Gospel, 1825

5. John S Thompson, a New York minister, published another similar account in 1826.

"I dreamed Christ descended from the firmament, in a glare of brightness, exceeding tenfold the brilliancy of the meridian Sun, and he came to me saying, 'I commission you to go and tell mankind that I am come; and bid every man to shout victory."

John S. Thompson – The Christian Guide to a Right Understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, 1826

6. Solomon Chamberlin, an early member of the Church, published a pamphlet of his experience before he met Joseph Smith.

"Dissatisfied with the religions he had tried, Chamberlain prayed for further guidance, and in 1816, according to his account, "the Lord revealed to me in a vision of the night an angel," whom Chamberlain asked about the right way. The angel told him that the churches were corrupt and that God would soon raise up an apostolic church. Chamberlain printed up an account of his visions and was still distributing them and looking for the apostolic church when he stopped in Palmyra."

John Taylor – Nauvoo Journal, Jan-Sept 1845, BYU Studies 23 no.3, p.45. Referring to A Sketch of the Experience of Solomon Chamberlin, Lyons, New York, 1829

It appears that when Joseph Smith initially wrote his First Vision experience in 1832, many [Top] lated stories of visionary

experiences with Heavenly Father and Jesus. Joseph's story turns out to be quite a common claim in his day.

Contradictory Accounts of the First Vision

Josephsmithpapers.org records 4 separate accounts of the First Vision by Joseph between 1832-1842.

Earliest Account – Joseph Smith's journal. Letterbook 1A, 27 November 1832.

Top

In his first account, Joseph mentions that he had already concluded that the world had apostatized from the faith and that "there was no society or denomination built upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament." He then has an encounter with "the Lord," but makes no mention of two separate personages. Joseph then writes that his sins are forgiven and the Lord agrees with Joseph's conclusion about the corruption of Christianity.

Second Account – Joseph's 1835 account notes that while one of the two personages testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, neither personage is specifically identified as God or Jesus. Joseph writes that he also sees "many angels."

Third Account – 1838 (draft 2) account adopted as the official version.

Top

Fourth Account –1842 account from the Wentworth Letter notes two beings; again neither identified as God or Jesus.

Which One Is Correct?

Just after the turn of the century, the Church needed to decide on an official account of the First Vision. It picked the version that was printed in the Times and Seasons on March 15th, 1842. What is now found in The Pearl of Great Price is the 2nd draft of an account written by James Mulholland, one of Joseph's scribes.

It was the first time any account identified the heavenly visitor(s), as anything other than angels. Compared to the earliest mention of the First Vision written by Joseph Smith himself, the official account written by Mulholland shows some discrepancies. Joseph's motivation to pray in the grove was originally a desire for the forgiveness of his sins, not to know which churches were true because Joseph had already come to the conclusion that all ch ere false. Also, the near-

death experience of being overcome by an evil power is only found in the James Mulholla h. And most importantly

Top

death experience of being overcome by an evil power is only found in the James Mulholland version. And most importantly, Joseph states, "I saw the Lord" vs. "I saw two Personages."

Summary from Joseph's First Account

· Already thought all churches were not true
· Desired for mercy
· Prayed
· Saw a pillar of light
· Saw the Lord

Summary from the Pearl of Great price

· Desired to know which church was true
· Prayed
· Overcome by the power of Satan
· Saw a pillar of light
· Saw 2 personages

The differences between both accounts are quite significant, especially in the most important piece of information they are communicating. If they are both supposed to be of the same event, then why would the official account say he spoke to God and Jesus, while Joseph's journal says he only saw the Lord? No priesthood, relief society or Sunday school manual has ever mentioned that the First Vision story found in the Pearl of Great Price differs significantly from the one Joseph originally wrote.

Contemporary Accounts

It appears that Joseph told the elders of the Church a very different experience than any of his written accounts.

> "The Lord did not come with the armies of heaven … but He did send his **angel** to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith jun., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol. 2, 1855, p.171

> "The same organization and Gospel that Christ died for … is again established in this generation. How did it come? By the ministering of an holy **angel** from God, out of heaven, who held converse with man, and revealed unto him the darkness that enveloped the world … He told him the Gospel was not among men, and that there was not a true organization of His kingdom in the world … Joseph was strengthened by the Spirit and power of God, and was enabled to listen to the teachings of the angel. . . The man to whom the angel appeared obeyed the Gospel."
>
> Wilford Woodruff – Journal of Discourses, vol.2, 1855,pp.196-197

> "He [Joseph Smith] went humbly before the Lord and inquired of Him, and the Lord answered his prayer, and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of **angels**, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong."
>
> George A. Smith – Journal of Discourses, 1863, vol.12, pp.334

> "How was it, and which was right? None of them was right, just as it was when the Prophet Joseph asked the **angel** which of the sects was right that he might join it. The answer was that none of them are right. What, none of them? No. We will not stop to argue that question; the angel told him to join none of them that none of them were right."
>
> John Taylor – Journal of Discourses, 1879, pp.158-171

Top

John Taylor – Journal of Discourses, Vol.20, 1879, pp.158-174

All these statements reveal that as late as 35 years after Joseph's death, and 59 years after his vision, the Church was still not teaching that Joseph saw two personages but only an "angel."

Continued Concealment

Using the vast resources of the Church education system, members are not informed of the inconsistencies relating to Joseph's visions. It also appears that average members are not the only ones surprised by this evidence. President of the First Quorum of the Seventy, S. Dilworth Young, published a statement in the Improvement Era on this subject.

> "I cannot remember the time when I have not heard the story, concerning the coming of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I am concerned however with one item which has recently been called to my attention on this matter. There appears to be going about our communities some writing to the effect that the Prophet Joseph Smith evolved his doctrine from what might have been a vision, in which he is supposed to have said that he saw an angel, instead of the Father and the Son. According to this theory, by the time he was inspired to write the occurrence in 1838, he had come to the conclusion that there were two beings.
>
> This rather shocked me. I can see no reason why the Prophet, with his brilliant mind, would have failed to remember in sharp relief every detail of that eventful day. I can remember quite vividly that in 1915 I had a mere dream, and while the dream was prophetic in nature, it was not startling. It has been long since fulfilled, but I can remember every detail of it as sharply and clearly as though it had happened yesterday. How then could any man conceive that the Prophet, receiving such a vision as he received, would not remember it and would fail to write it clearly, distinctly, and accurately?"
>
> S. Dilworth Young – Improvement Era, General Conference edition, June 1957

Context

Considering that First Vision-like accounts were common in New England, that it took 60 years for leadership to become aware of the "two personages", and the active suppression of this information, it feels hard to be confident in the truthfulness of the First Vision.

Chapter 2
The Translation

Top

The Church has taught that the translation process of the Book of Mormon looked like this: Joseph Smith read the golden plates like a book, translating the text out loud to Oliver Cowdery, who served as scribe. The context surrounding the translation process raises issues that are not evident to members of the Church. These issues involve the actual translation using a seer stone, Joseph's use of folk magic, and his trouble with the law regarding these circumstances.

The Actual Method

"Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man."

David Whitmer – Address to All Believers In Christ, 1887
Also in Russell M. Nelson – A Treasured Testament Ensign, July 1993

Contrary to general Church teachings, Joseph did not read the gold plates like an open book at all. Rather, during the translation process, he buried his face in a hat that contained a common rock. The gold plates were either covered by a cloth where no one, including Joseph, could see them or they were in a different location altogether. The Church knew the true method, yet commissioned works of art and film and uses the education system to teach otherwise.

> "I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us."

Emma Smith – [illegible]imony of Sister Emma,
[illegible]rald 26, Oct. 1, 1879

Top

Emma Smith and David Whitmer describe Joseph's use of the seer stone and hat, but this information had all but been buried. In December 2013 the Church released an essay addressing the translation of the Book of Mormon issue. Finally, after public criticisms, the seer stone is again mentioned for a new generation of members.

> "The other instrument, which Joseph Smith discovered in the ground years before he retrieved the gold plates, was a small oval stone, or "seer stone." As a young man during the 1820s, Joseph Smith, like others in his day, used a seer stone to look for lost objects and buried treasure."
>
> Book of Mormon Translation, LDS.org/topics

On August 4th, 2015, LDS.org published an article titled, Joseph the Seer. It contains the first ever, official image of one of Joseph Smith's seer stones. It is the very same stone Joseph found while digging a well on the property of Willard Chase in 1822. For nearly 200 years the Church has had the stone in their possession yet never actively taught about it; and in the case of former president of the Church, Joseph Fielding Smith, has denied its role. (Doctrines of Salvation Vol.3)

Folk Magic

Could Joseph Smith's experiences actually be products of his family's practice of local folk magic? BYU Studies Quarterly describes the Smith family culture when it stated, "In frontier America, seer stones or 'peep stones' were commonly used by lost object finders, people engaged in the widespread practice of lost treasure digging." (BYU Studies Quarterly, Vol.55, No.1, 2016)

Director of Center for Western Studies at BYU and president of the Mormon History Association, Ronald W. Walker, put the Smith family's activities in historical context.

> "From Colonial times to at least the age of Jackson [1776-1837] Americans dug for magical treasure. There were hundreds and probably thousands of these money-diggers all seeking troves of fabled coins, mines, jewels and other valued prizes "The money-diggers placed faith in conjuring elemental spirits, thrice spoken dreams, seeric gifts, and enchanted treasure."
> "Clearly the ideas of hidden but guarded treasure with their secondary and accompanying motifs of ancient texts, animals, boxes, devils, caves, gold, incantations, mountains and even t[illegible]ng number three were an ancient bequest.

Top

"A treasure-finding device used by adepts was the "peep" or "seer" stone, whose acclaimed gifts excelled even those of the divining rod. Such stones seemed to be everywhere and were of every possible description. Joseph Smith's various stones reportedly included a smooth grey egg-shaped rock found in a neighbor's well, a second which he reportedly dug up near Lake Erie after espying it in his neighbor's stone and still others collected from the Mississippi River sands near Nauvoo, Illinois.

"With most village seers requiring that the light be secluded this stone in the hat procedure was standard by this method an adept could see within the stone crystal a helpful spirit or the precise locality of the underground treasure." "While finding the right moment to dig was important, the need to circumvent the treasure's guardian was crucial. Like its Old World antecedents, the American treasure keeper might be demonic or divine. Or it could be a cat, dog, snake or some other protecting animal. But generally, the American treasure guardian was a murdered youth or man whose body had been left with the buried valuables to ensure their protection. Guardian Indians were a frequent motif while a murdered pirate protected Captain Kidd's troves.

"As Vermont's early nineteenth-century emigration swept into upstate New York the money digging frenzy came with it. Such superstition was frequent in the new settlements. The Palmyra Reflector labeled the New York money hunting mania, "Men and women without distinction of age or sex became marvelously wise in the occult sciences, many dreamed and others saw visions disclosing to them, deep in the bowels of the earth, rich and shining treasures.

"Rumors constantly swirled about hunters' smiling fortunes, which excited still others to further digging. Smith family reportedly found objects as a cannonball, a cache of gold watches and according to the viewpoint of some of their neighbors the golden plates which produced the book of Mormon. Indeed in ways that are yet to be explored, money digging may have influenced two of the nineteenth century's major social and religious movements Mormonism and Spiritualism. Its touch on American society was not light."

Ronald W. Walker – The Persistent Idea of Treasure Hunting in America.
https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/ index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/5447/5097

"Like many other New Englanders, they were familiar with searches for lost treasure by supernatural means. Joseph Smith's father was reputed to be one of these treasure seekers, and Joseph Smith himself had found a stone, called a seer stone, which reportedly enabled him to find lost objects. Treasure-seekers wanted to employ him to help with their searches. One, a man named Josiah Stowell, hired Joseph and his father in 1825 to dig for a supposed Spanish treasure near Harmony, Pennsylvania. The effort came to nothing, and the Smiths returned home, but the neighbors continued to think of the Smiths as part of the treasure-seeking company."

Richard L. Bushman – Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Joseph Smith
www.eom.byu.edu/index.php/Smith,Joseph

"By 1825, [19 yrs old – 5 years after the First Vision] young Joseph had a reputation in Manchester and Palmyra for his activities as a treasure seer, or someone who used a seer stone to locate gold or other valuable objects buried in the earth."

Top

Elder Steven E. Snow – Church Historian, Ensign, September 2015

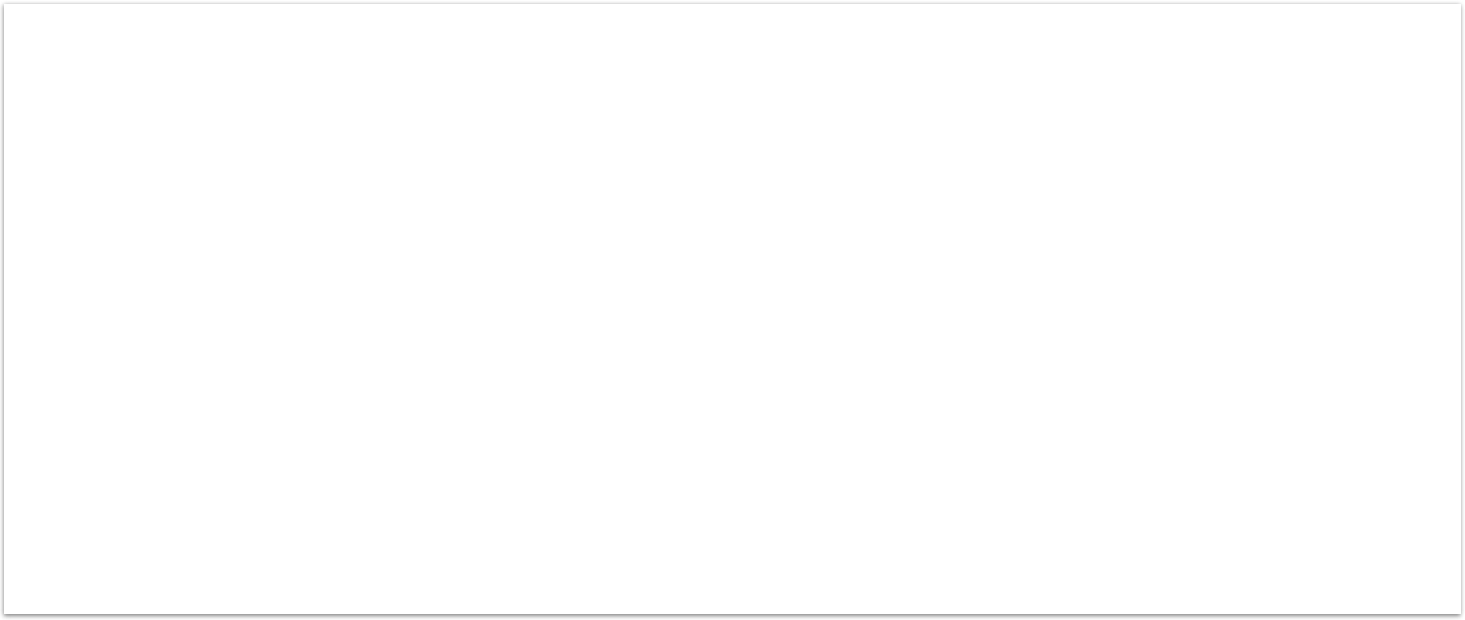
Even Isaac Hale did not consent to Joseph and Emma's marriage because he did not have stable employment and had a reputation of looking into peep stones for buried treasure. At one point Joseph visited Emma's father in an attempt to reconcile for marrying Emma anyway. Forgivingly, Isaac invited Joseph and Emma to make their home in Harmony.

> "I said with paternal concern and some compassion, that if Joseph would move to Pennsylvania and give up his old practice of looking in the stone, I would assist him in getting into business. Smith stated to me that he had given up what he called 'glass-looking' and that he expected and was willing to work hard for a living."
>
> Isaac Hale – History of the Church, vol.1, ch.2

The Smith family's use of seer stones to find buried gold treasure was a common folk magic practice in New England.

Trouble With The Law

Between 21-25 years old, Joseph Smith was arrested 4 separate times for fraud. Josephsmithpapers.org displays a trial bill for Justice Albert Neely where Josiah Stowell brought charges against Joseph for glass looking and was convicted of a misdemeanor.



> "Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowell in Bainbridge … That he had a certain stone which he had occasion[illegible]at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in [illegible]ner where gold mines were at a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowell several [illegible]nd had informed him

Top

where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowell had been engaged in digging for them.

Josiah Stowell sworn: says that prisoner had … pretended to have skill of telling where hidden treasures in the earth were by means of looking through a certain stone; that prisoner had looked for him sometimes; once to tell him about money buried in Bend Mountain in Pennsylvania [and] once for gold on Monument Hill.

Jonathon Thompson: says that prisoner was requested to look for chest of money; did look, and pretended to know where it was … Smith looked in his hat while there, and when very dark, and told how the chest was situated…That the last time he looked he discovered distinctly the two Indians who buried the trunk, that a quarrel ensued between them, and that one of said Indians was killed by the other, and thrown into the hold beside the trunk, to guard it, as he supposed. And therefore the Court find the Defendant guilty."

Joseph Smith's 1826 court transcript

Context

BYU Professor, Ronald Walker, states that the events surrounding Joseph and the gold plates were very typical of early 19th-century folk magic practitioners.

If Joseph used a seer stone to defraud people while selling treasure-hunting services, then used the same stone to write the Book of Mormon while selling religious services, it speaks to the overall credibility of his claim. Considering that Joseph did not even use the plates during the translation, considering that folk magic was common in the New England area, and he had been in trouble with the law for treasure hunting, it seems hard to feel confident in the authenticity of the official translation story.

Top

Chapter 3
The Witnesses

Losing confidence in the truthfulness of Joseph's claims made me think of the witnesses to the plates and how their testimonies lend credibility to the entire narrative; however, research turns up issues of their own. These included the fact that no scribe ever saw the plates, the 3 and 8 witnesses only saw the plates with their spiritual eyes, the printed testimony did not reflect literal events, and nearly all the witnesses left the Church.

The Scribes

During the translation process, Joseph was either behind a curtain or the plates sat underneath a cloth in a box in another room. No scribe to the translation process (Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris or Emma Smith) was ever allowed to see the plates. Emma only felt the plates through a cloth on the table. Why wouldn't Joseph want anybody to see the plates? (By the Gift and Power of God, Elder Neal A. Maxwell January 1997 Ensign quoting David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness, ed. Lyndon W. Cook, [1991], p173) and (Joseph Smith III, "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," pp289–90).

The 3 Witnesses

The History of the Church records the event where Martin Harris, David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery became the first witnesses to the gold plates after Joseph Smith. Joseph describes how the men gained their witness of the plates in a purely visionary setting.

> "Not many days after the above commandment was given, we four, viz., Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself, agreed to retire into the woods, and try to obtain by fervent and humble prayer, the fulfilment of the promises given in the above revelation—that the eyes would have a view of the plates. We accordingly made choice of a piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer's house, to which we

Top

> retired, and having knelt down, we began to pray in much faith to Almighty God to bestow upon us a realization of these promises. According to previous arrangement, I commenced by vocal prayer to our Heavenly Father, and was followed by each of the others in succession. We did not at the first trial, however, obtain any answer or manifestation of divine favor in our behalf. We again observed the same order of prayer, each calling on and praying fervently to God in rotation, but with the same result as before. Upon this, our second failure, Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw himself from us, believing, as he expressed himself, that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for. He accordingly withdrew from us, and we knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, 'David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments;' when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, 'These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear."
>
> Joseph Smith – History of the Church, vol.1, pp.54–55

Joseph Smith, David Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery saw an angel and the plates after Martin Harris withdrew from the group. Joseph goes on to tells how he left David and Oliver and went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom he found at a considerable distance fervently engaged in prayer. Then they both joined in prayer, and according to Joseph, "the same vision was opened to our view." Remember, the word "vision" means dream not reality. It is important to note that Joseph never claimed to have carried the plates into the woods where they prayed. Praying to see the plates in the woods seems rather odd if Joseph actually possessed physical plates. Why was prayer necessary to see the plates if they were in fact, a physical object? Martin Harris' behavior also seems strange if the plates actually existed.

The Testimony of The 3 Witnesses is Not Accurate

Printed in the Book of Mormon is the Testimony of the Three Witnesses. It is not an accurate account of the events, but a reconstruction of multiple experiences.

> "And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates… And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true."
>
> Testimony of the Three Witnesses, The Book of Mormon

The language in this statement makes it seem as if all four men experienced this event together. However, the History of the Church passage clearly shows that the Martin Harris' vision happened separately. Not only that, but later statements made by David Whitmer and Martin Harris show that the angel brought additional objects for them to see. This is curiously left out of the signed Testimony of the Three Witnesses.

> "We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon but also the brass pl plates of the Book of Ether, the plates containing the records of the wickedness and secret combinat he people of the world down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates there ap as it were, a table with

Top

> down to the time of their being engraved, and many other plates … there appeared as if were, a table with many records or plates upon it, besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the Sword of Laban, the Directors i.e., the ball which Lehi had-and the Interpreters [Urim and Thummim]."
>
> David Whitmer – interview by Orson Pratt, Book of Mormon Compendium, 1878, pp.55-56

Why fail to mention the other plates and important Nephite artifacts?

The 8 Witnesses

On March 25, 1838, Martin Harris testified in public that none of the 3 or 8 witnesses saw or handled the physical plates. This statement caused apostles Luke S. Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson, John F. Boynton, high priest Stephen Burnett and LDS Seventy Warren Parish to leave the church. A letter on Josephsmithpapers.org dated April 15, 1838, Stephen Burnett wrote the following to Lyman Johnson:

> "I have reflected long and deliberately upon the history of this church and weighed the evidence for and against it — loth to give it up — but when I came to hear Martin Harris state in public that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision or imagination, neither Oliver [Cowdery] nor David [Whitmer] and also that the eight witnesses never saw them and hesitated to sign that instrument for that reason, but were persuaded to do it, the last pedestal gave way, in my view our foundations was sapped and the entire superstructure fell a heap of ruins, … I was followed by W. [Warren] Parish, Luke Johnson and John Boynton, all of who concurred with me. After we were done speaking, M[artin] Harris arose and said he was sorry for any man who rejected the Book of Mormon for he knew it was true, he said he had hefted the plates repeatedly in a box with only a tablecloth or handkerchief over them, but he never saw them only as he saw a city through a mountain. And said that he never should have told that the testimony of the eight was false, if it had not been picked out of air but should have let it passed as it was."
>
> Stephen Burnett – Letter Stephen Burnett to Johnson, April 15 1838
> http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letterbook-2?p=69

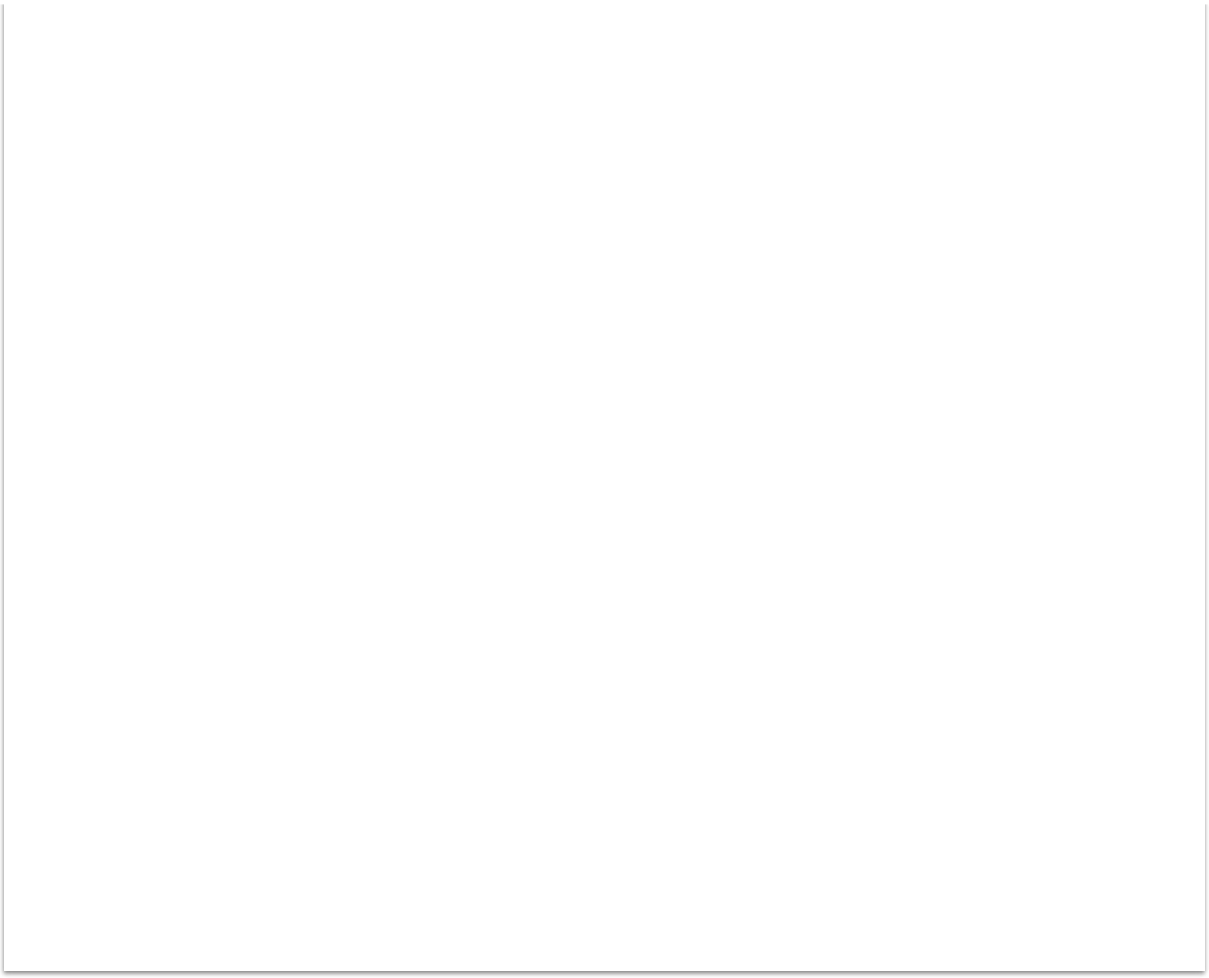
On April 5, 1839 member of the Church, Theodore Turley, challenged John Whitmer, one of the 8 witnesses, to either affirm or deny his testimony regarding the gold plates. Whitmer responded by saying,

> "I now say, I handled those plates … they were shown to me by a supernatural power"
>
> John Whitmer – History of the Church, vol.3 p307

Why would a supernatural power be necessary if the plates actually existed? Couldn't Joseph just invite the men he wanted to be witnesses over to his house, take the plates out of the box where he kept them and pass them around? Why are visions and supernatural means necessary to see these plates?

Published on Josephsmithpapers.org are the signed statements by the 3 and 8 witnesses.

Top



JosephSmithPapers reveals that both statements and all signatures are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. The official statements printed in the Book of Mormon are not signed with original signatures, dated or given a specific location where the events occurred. These are not 11 legally sworn statements; rather they are accounts pre-written, pre-signed and agreed upon at some later time, especially when considering that not a single witness ever saw the plates.

Where Are The Plates Now?

After completing the Book of Mormon Joseph had no more use of the plates and he gave up possession of them. Wilford Woodruff records,

> "President Young said in relation to Joseph Smith returning the plates of the Book of Mormon, that he did not return them to the box from where he had received them. But he went into a cave in the Hill Cumorah with Oliver Cowdery and deposited those plates upon a table."
>
> Wilford Woodruff – Leaves From My Journal, December 11, 1869

In an interview, David Whitmer recalls:

> Interviewer – Where are the plates now?
> Whitmer – In a cave, where the angel has hidden them up till the time arriv the plates, which are sealed, shall be translated. God will yet raise up a mighty one, who shall d rk till it is finished and Jesus comes again.

Top

> Interviewer – Where is that cave?
> Whitmer – In the State of New York."
>
> David Whitmer – Deseret Evening News, August 16, 1878

According to Wilford Woodruff and David Whitmer, it seems as though they are still here on the Earth in a cave in the Hill Cumorah. Surely the Church must be in possession of the plates as there is a visitor's center at the Hill Cumorah.

The Succession Crisis

For roughly three years after Joseph and Hyrum Smith's deaths, several people competed to assume the role as prophet and leader of the Church. Claiming to be the new rightful successor were: Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young, James Strang, Samuel Smith, William Smith, Joseph Smith III and others.

Sidney Rigdon – First counselor in the First Presidency to Joseph Smith, argued that by virtue of revelation from the Prophet himself, he should be rightful heir to Joseph's position.

> Doctrine and Covenants 20:6
> And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom

James Strang – Asserted that, unlike the others, he had physical proof of his prophetic calling. He produced a 3-page letter, supposedly written by Joseph Smith, naming Strang as successor. While the wording of the letter is somewhat ambiguous and the handwriting does not match Joseph's, it still convinced many members of the Church to follow Strang.

Top

Brigham Young – Fighting between individual competitors lasted 3 years until the most senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young, was voted "President of the whole Church of Latter Day Saints" by the remaining members of the Twelve.

Joseph Smith III – While Joseph Smith and five others were imprisoned at Liberty Jail in Missouri, his young son, Joseph III, was brought to visit on several occasions. Imprisoned with Joseph was apostle Lyman Wight. Lyman did not agree with Brigham's new position as leader of the Church because he witnessed Joseph Smith ordain his oldest son, Joseph III, to be his successor.

> "Joseph called on me shortly after we came out of [Liberty] jail to lay hands with him on the head of a youth and heard him cry aloud, 'You are my successor when I depart,' and heard the blessings poured on his head." (Who was the youth Lyman referred to?) "The fifties assembled should have called on all the authorities of the church down to the lay members from all the face of the earth, and then have called on young Joseph, and held him up before the congregation of Israel to take his father's place in the flesh!"
>
> Lyman Wight – Gospel Herald, Voree, WI, August 31, 1848
> Saints Advocate, Vol.7, September 1884

None of the 3 scribes of the Book of Mormon, Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery, wanted to be affiliated with the new Brigham Young-led Church. None of the 3 Witnesses wanted to be part of Brigham's Church and none of the 8 Witnesses did either. While Samuel Smith and Joseph Sr. did not end up leaving the Church like the rest, it is important to note that the Church was financially supporting them at the time. Once Brigham took over as president, not a single surviving scribe or member of the 3 and 8 witnesses decided to stay with the Church anymore.

Context

1. No scribe was allowed to see the plates.
2. Witnesses that did say they saw the plates said they did so spiritually, not physically.
3. Signatures of the witnesses are the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery.
4. All witnesses to the plates ended up leaving the Church, save 2 members of the Smith fa

Top

How much credibility can we give the testimonies of those that have claimed to see the plates when the records show that it was seen in visions, not physically as the Church teaches? How much trust can we put in the statements of these witnesses when all of them that weren't being financially supported by the Church ended up leaving?

Chapter 4
The Kinderhook Plates

The Kinderhook Plates are six brass plates engraved by men from Illinois for the purpose of exposing Joseph Smith as someone who could not divinely translate ancient writings. This chapter covers the background, Joseph's translation, the forgery claim, the 1953 test results, and the 1980 test results.

Background

"On April 23, 1843, a group of men excavated an old earth mound just outside the town of Kinderhook, Illinois, and came up with a most interesting find. The excavation was headed by Robert Wiley, a local merchant. After digging down about twelve feet, they came upon "fire burned rock, charcoal, ashes, and badly decomposed human bones. Near the [corner] a bundle was found that consisted of six plates of brass of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, a ring through them all and clasped with two clasps. The plates appeared to have some kind of writing on them but were so badly oxidized they could not be clearly distinguished until Dr. W. P.
Harris, MD, treated them with a dilute solution of sulphuric acid which made them perfectly clear. They were completely covered with "hieroglyphics" on both sides. A certificate stating the facts of the find was drawn up and signed by nine of the men present and sent to nearby newspapers."

Welby W. Ricks – The Kinderhook Plates,
The Improvement Era, September 19, 1962

Translation

Top

> "I insert facsimiles of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook, in Pike county, Illinois, on April 23, by Mr. Robert Wiley and others, while excavating a large mound. They found a skeleton about six feet from the surface of the earth, which must have stood nine feet high. The plates were found on the breast of the skeleton and were covered on both sides with ancient characters. I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth."
>
> Joseph Smith – History of the Church, May 1, 1843, vol.5 , p.372

Joseph claimed to translate a portion of the plates. He stated that the body they were found with was descended from Ham.

Brigham Young was also with Joseph at the time he was studying the plates. He made a tracing of one of the kinderhoook plates in his notebook. Inside the drawing he wrote:

> "May 3, 1843. I took this[sketch] at Joseph Smith's house. Found near Quincy."
>
> Brigham Young – Brigham Young papers, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History, BYU.

The Forgery Claim

In a letter, Wilbur Fugate, one of the men present during the excavation, claimed to have helped craft the plates.

> "I received your letter in regard to those plates, and will say in answer that they are a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton and myself…None of the nine persons who signed the certificate knew the secret, except, Wiley and I. We read in Pratt's prophecy that "Truth is yet to spring up out of the earth." We concluded to prove the prophecy by way of a joke.
>
> We soon made our plans and executed them, Bridge Whitton cut them out of some pieces of copper; Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid and putting it on the plates. When they were finished we put them together with rust made of nitric acid, old iron and lead, and bound them with a piece of hoop iron,

Top

covering them completely with the rust.

Our plans worked admirably. A certain Sunday was appointed for digging. The night before, Wiley went to the Mound where he had previously dug to the depth of about eight feet, there

being a flat rock that sounded hollow beneath, and put them under it. On the following morning quite a number of citizens were there to assist in the search, there being two Mormon elders present (Marsh and Sharp). The rock was soon removed, but some time elapsed before the plates were discovered. I finally picked them up and exclaimed, "A piece of pot metal!" Fayette Grubb snatched them from me and struck them against the rock and they fell to pieces. Dr. Harris examined them and said they had hieroglyphics on them. He took acid and removed the rust and they were soon out on exhibition."

Wilbur Fugate Letter of Wilbur Fugate to James T. Cobb,
8 April 1878,Wisconsin Historical Society,Madison, WI

Faithful LDS members disregarded Fulgate's story and held to Joseph's translation of the plates and maintained that the plates were in fact ancient artifacts.

1953 Test Results

Addressing the forgery claim of Wilbur Fugate, the Church used two professional engravers to examine the Kinderhook plates. The Improvement Era article goes on to state:

"Mr. Fugate said Wiley and he had etched the plates. Yet two professional engraves were invited to view the plates in 1953 and give their unbiased opinion about them – which they did freely and without charge. They stated clearly that the plate was engraved with a pointed instrument." "The plates are now back in their original category of genuine. What scholars may learn from this ancient record in future years or what may be translated by divine power is an exciting thought to contemplate. This much remains. Joseph Smith, Jun., stands as a true prophet and translator of ancient records by divine means and all the world is invited to investigate the truth which has sprung out of the earth not only of the Kinderhook plates, but of the Book of Mormon as well."

Welby W. Ricks – The Kinderhook Plates, The Improvement Era, September 19, 1962

The assessment was that the plates were authentic and Joseph was a true prophet. As late as the printing of this 1962 article, every prophet from Joseph Smith to David O. McKay believed the plates to be authentic.

1980 Test Results

In 1980 BYU professor Stanley B. Kimball was able to secure permission to perform more scientific testing on the plates. In the August 1981 Ensign, the Church published an article detailing the testing processes, results and conclusion,which reverses its earlier position.

"These tests, involving some very sophisticated analytical techniques, were p d by Professor D. Lynn Johnson of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Northv University. Dr. Johnson

Top

used a scanning electron microscope (SEM) to examine the grooves that form the characters on the plate to determine whether they were cut or scratched with a tool or whether they were etched with acid. A scanning Auger microprobe (SAM) was used to detect any nitrogen residues that might have been left in the grooves as a result of etching with nitric acid.

The irregular, grainy texture characteristic of acid etching is evident, not a striated surface that would have been produced by an engraving tool. A thorough SEM examination of the characters on the plate brought Dr. Johnson to the conclusion that the characters on the plate were indeed prepared by acid etching, not by any form of tooling, scratching, or cutting.

It became apparent during the SEM study that a residue of some kind was present in some of the grooves. The scanning Auger microprobe (SAM) was used to analyze these residues. A clear indication of nitrogen was detected, which would be consistent with a copper nitrate residue and could indicate that nitric acid was used in the etching, as those who reportedly originated the deception had claimed.

"A recent electronic and chemical analysis of a metal plate (one of six original plates) brought in 1843 to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, appears to solve a previously unanswered question in Church history, helping to further evidence that the plate is what its producers later said it was—a nineteenth-century attempt to lure Joseph Smith into making a translation of ancient-looking characters that had been etched into the plates."

Stanley P. Kimball – Kinderhook Plates Brought to Joseph Smith Appear to be a Nineteenth-Century Hoax, Ensign, 1981

Context

1. Fake ancient plates were fashioned out of copper and iron. Using acid, they etched counterfeit hieroglyphics.
2. The plates were taken to Joseph Smith where he pronounced them genuine and translated the "ancient characters."
3. The entire body of the Church believed in the authenticity of the plates.
4. Wilbur Fugate claimed he, Wiley and Whitton made the plates as a joke.
5. A 1953 observation claims the plates are genuine; reinforcing the Church's position.
6. After further scientific testing, it was concluded that the Kinderhook Plates were absolutely not genuine.

The fraudulent Kinderhook plates raise several troubling concerns. How could the prophet Joseph Smith believe they were authentic and claim to have translated the symbols as an account of a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, King of Egypt? This also puts into question Joseph's translations of the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham characters.

Chapter 5
The Word of Wisdom

Top

In studying all aspects of early Church history, I often though about the Word of Wisdom and how much the revelation means in verifying Joseph Smith's prophetic abilities. However, the more I researched the historical context of Word of Wisdom the more I learned that it was not unique in its instructions for health during that period. In fact, conventional ideas, movements, and additional influences likely shaped what we have come to know as "the Lord's law of health."

The Word of Wisdom

The Word of Wisdom was written by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio on February 27, 1833.

Doctrine and Covenants 89.
2.To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint
5. That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your
Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him.
6. And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make.
7. And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies.
9. And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.
11. Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving.
12. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving;
nevertheless they are to be used sparingly;
13. And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.
17. wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for th and for swine, and for all beasts of the
field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grai

Top

There are several things mentioned in The Word of Wisdom that aren't commonly observed in modern LDS culture.

Verse 2 – Clearly states that the Word of Wisdom is not a commandment; yet modern members are asked if they follow it during temple interviews and will not be issued a temple recommend if the interviewer feels that they do not properly adhere.

Verse 6,7,9,17 – Makes the distinction between 4 different types of drinks: wine, strong, hot and mild. Wine = ok for the sacrament if you make it yourself. Strong drinks = not ok. Hot drinks = not ok. Mild drinks = ok.

Verse 9 – Mentions "hot drinks." What exactly does "hot drinks" refer to? Apostle George Q. Cannon stated,

> "We are told, and very plainly too, that hot drinks – tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa and all drinks of this kind are not good for man.... We must not permit them to drink liquor or hot drinks, or hot soups or to use tobacco or other articles that are injurious."
>
> George Q. Cannon – General Conference, April 7, 1868, Journal of Discourses, vol.12

Verse 11 – Only eat produce in their proper season.

Verse 12,13 – Meat should only be eaten in the winter or during a famine.

Verse 17 – Mild drinks made from barley are ok. What drinks are made from barley? Beer.

It seems that the modern Church has settled on coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs as the new interpretation. But according to the text of the Word of Wisdom, members should refrain from hot drinks of all kinds, chocolate and soups included. Alcohol is not outright banned, but only strong drinks (hard liquor). In addition, according to the Word of Wisdom, all members should be vegetarian most of the year. These parts have been reinterpreted to change the original intent. Additionally, the Lord's Law of Health seems to lack real health considerations. Currently, extremely obese members are given temple recommends, while active, healthy, and fit members who drink coffee and tea would not qualify. It seems that if God really wanted to give the saints a code of health that would have prevented pioneer deaths due to a long list of illnesses including scarlet fever, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, influenza, pneumonia, cholera, malaria and small pox, he would have added things like the need for sanitizing water by boiling, increased personal hygiene and quarantining of sick persons.

In fact, the Church has long taught that coffee and tea were unhealthy; however, this reputation appears to be mistaken. Studies involving over 1.5 million participants who consumed 3-5 cups of coffee a day were at the lowest risk for cardiovascular diseases, stroke, prostate, breast and lung cancers, compared with those who drank none. Similar research show that polyphenol, a powerful antioxidant found in black, green and white teas, combat free-radicals that contribute to cancer, heart disease, kidney damage, diabetes, and helps lower cholesterol. (http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/tea-types-and-their-healthbenefits#1) and (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/upshot/more-consensus-on-coffees-benefits-than-you-might-think.html)

Possible Influences

Popular Misconceptions Regarding "Hot Drinks"

One common misconceptions in this era said that hot liquids were not good for the body. A popular book titled, Wholesome Advice against the Abuse of Hot Liquors, particularly targeted tea, coffee and hot chocolate labeling them as

Top

unhealthy. This book argued that an excess consumption of hot drinks caused the blood and insides to heat up and that "Excess of heat is the most common cause of sickness and death." Medical science at the time was so basic that the evidence presented in the book was based largely upon crude anatomical knowledge and references to classical Greek and Roman texts. A few decades later, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was arguing for complete abstinence from tea, on the grounds that it gave rise to "numberless disorders, particularly those of a nervous kind". He placed emphasis on the religious importance of self-denial. (http://www.tea.co.uk/a-social-history#temperance) Interestingly, Joseph Smith became very familiar with Methodist teachings when in June 1828 he became a member of minister Nathanial Lewis' Harmony, Pennsylvania congregation. It is important to note that Joseph became a member after the First Vision where he was told that all religions were incorrect.

The Temperance Movement

Alcohol had been socially acceptable during the colonial era, but a social shift in the early 19th century initiated the belief that drinking was no longer acceptable. The temperance movement was an organized effort to encourage moderation in the consumption of alcohol or press for complete abstinence. The American Temperance Society was founded in 1826 and it benefited from a renewed interest in religion and morality in America. The movement began to grow exponentially. Within 12 years it claimed more than 8,000 local groups and over 1.5 million members. By 1839, 18 temperance journals were being published. Some groups took positions on moral issues and advocated temperance with alcohol rather than abstinence. The movement split along two lines: moderates who allowed some drinking and relied on moral persuasion alone, and radicals who demanded prohibition laws to restrict or ban alcohol.Prohibitionists dominated many of the largest temperance organizations after the 1830's, and temperance eventually became synonymous with prohibition.

> "On October 6, 1830, the Kirtland Temperance Society was organized with two hundred thirty nine members…. This society at Kirtland was a most active one…. it revolutionized the social customs of the neighborhood. The Temperance Society succeeded in eliminating a distillery in Kirtland on February 1, 1833, just twentyseven days before the Latter-day Saint revelation counseling abstinence was announced, and that the distillery at Mentor, near Kirtland, was also closed at the same time."
>
> Brigham Young University Studies, Winter 1959, pp.39-40

Emma Smith

Joseph Smith started a training school called the School of the Prophets for the elders of the Church, which opened in Kirtland on the second floor of the Newel K. Whitney mercantile store in January 1833. Brigham Young stated that the Word of Wisdom was given in response to problems encountered while conducting those meetings:

"I think I am as well acquainted with the circumstances which led to the giving of the Word of Wisdom…When

Top

they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first thing they did was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom, and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet [Joseph Smith] entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry."

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.12, p.158

Disregarding the Word of Wisdom

The History of the Church records that Joseph taught the Word of Wisdom but did not practice it. If the Lord really gave this revelation to Joseph, one would think he would at least follow it himself.

"We then partook of some refreshments, and our hearts were made glad with the fruit of the vine. This is according to the pattern set by our Savior Himself, and we feel disposed to patronize all the institutions of heaven."

Joseph Smith – History of the Church, January 14, 1836, vol.2, p.369

"Called at the office and drank a glass of wine with Sister Jenetta Richards, made by her mother in England, and reviewed a portion of the conference minutes."

Joseph Smith – History of the Church, May 3 1843, vol.5, p.380

"Ordinance on the Personal Sale of Liquors – Section 1. Be it ordained by the City Council of Nauvoo, that the Mayor of the city be and is hereby authorized to see or give spirits of any quantity as he in his wisdom shall judge to be for the health and comfort, or convenience of such travelers or other persons as shall visit his house from time to time. Passed December 12, 1843. Joseph Smith, Mayor."

Joseph Smith – History of the Church, December 12, 1843, vol.6, p.111

"Before the jailor came in, his boy brought in some water, and said the guard wanted some wine. Joseph gave Dr. Richards two dollars to give the guard; but the guard said one was enough, and would take no more. The guard immediately sent for a bottle of wine, pipes, and two small papers of tobacco; and one of the guards brought them into the jail soon after the jailor went out. Dr. Richards uncorked the bottle, and presented a glass to Joseph, who tasted, as also Brother Taylor and the d[illegible]d the bottle was then given to the guard, who turned to go out."

History of the Church[illegible]7, 1844, vol.6, p.616

Top

Context

1826 – American Temperance Society founded.
1828 – Joseph Smith becomes a member of the Methodist church that discouraged hot drinks.
1830 – Kirtland Temperance Society founded.
1833 – (Jan.) Joseph Smith hears complaints from Emma about tobacco.
1833 – (Feb. 1) The Kirtland Temperance Society eliminates the distillery in Kirtland.
1833 – (Feb. 27) Joseph writes the Word of Wisdom limiting hot drinks, tobacco and strong drinks.

I have never been taught in Church that abstinence from alcohol and other hot drinks were already popular concepts of time leading up to the revelation. It appears that the Word of Wisdom may not be unique instruction, but well within the context of 19th century assumptions. Perhaps it was spurred by Emma's complaints, added to by Methodist teachings and pressured by the local Kirtland Temperance Society.

Chapter 6
The Endowment

Was the temple endowment really a revelation from God or could it have another origin? This chapter covers the origin of Freemasonry, founders of the Church and their Masonic membership, and similarities between Masonic temple ceremonies and the LDS temple endowment.

Origin of Freemasonry

> "The earliest Masonic texts each contain some sort of a history of the craft, or mystery, of masonry. The oldest known work of this type, The Halliwell Manuscript, dating from between 1390 and 1425."
>
> Grand Lodge of British Columbia – The Halliwell Manuscript.

> "Some are also told that King Solomon ruled over Masonic lodges as grand master. The stories they weave around the building of the temple are obviously not literal or historical facts but a dramatic
>
> means of explaining the principles of Freemasonry. Freemasonry neither originated nor existed in Solomon's time. The general agreement amongst serious Masonic historians and researchers is that Freemasonry has arisen, either directly or indirectly, from the medieval stonemasons who built great cathedrals and castles. Those who favor the direct descent from operative masonry say

Top

there were three stages to the evolution of Freemasonry. The stonemasons gathered in huts (lodges) to rest and eat. These lodges gradually became not the hut but the grouping together of stonemasons to regulate their craft. In time, and in common with other trades, they developed primitive initiation ceremonies for new apprentices."

"As stonemasons could easily travel all over the country from one building site to another, and as there were also no trade union cards or certificates of apprenticeship they began to adopt a private word which a traveling stonemason could use when he arrived at a new site, to prove that he was properly trained and had been a member of a lodge. It was, after all, easier to communicate a special word to prove that you knew what you were doing and were entitled to the wages it deserved that to spend hours carving a block of stone to demonstrate your skills."

"We know that in the early 1600s these operative lodges began to admit men who had no connection with the trade – accepted or gentlemen masons. Why this was done and what form of ceremony was used is not known. As the 1600s drew to a close more and more gentlemen began to join the lodges, gradually taking them over and turning them into lodges of free and accepted or speculative masons, no longer having any connection with the stonemasons' craft. This is based on evidence from Scotland. In England, the first evidence of a lodge completely made up of non-operative masons is found. English evidence through the 1600s points to Freemasonry existing apart from any actual or supposed organization of operative stonemasons. This was a period of great religious and political turmoil and intolerance. Men were unable to meet together without differences of political and religious opinion leading to arguments. Opposing views split families and the English civil war of 1642-6 was the ultimate outcome. As their central idea was one of building a better society they borrowed their forms and symbols from the operative builders craft and took their central allegory from the Bible, the common source book known to all, in which the only building described in any detail is King Solomon' s Temple.

Stonemasons tools also provided them with a multiplicity of emblems to illustrate the principles they were putting forward. The formation of the premier Grand Lodge in 1717 had been followed, around 1725, by the Grand Lodge of Ireland and, in 1736; the Grand Lodge of Scotland. These three Grand Lodges did much to spread Freemasonry throughout the world, to the extent that all regular Grand Lodges throughout the world, whatever the immediate means of their formation, ultimately trace their origins back to one, or a combination, of the Grand Lodges within the British Isles."

Mastermason.com/jjcrowder/ history/history.html

Church leaders claim that the connection between Masons and Mormons date back to the stonemasons who built Solomon's temple in the Old Testament.

"Modern Masonry is a fragmentary presentation of the ancient order established by King Solomon. From whom it is said to have been handed down through the centuries. that he w orry there was such a similarity, because of the fact that the ordinances and rites revealed t Smith constituted a reintroduction upon the earth of the divine plan inaugurated in the Temple mon in ancient days.

Top

> Masonry is an apostasy from the ancient early order, just as so-called Christianity is an apostasy from the true Church of Christ"
>
> Elder Melvin J. Ballard – The Salt Lake Herald, December 29, 1919

> "We have the true Masonry. The Masonry of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon, and David. They have now and then a thing that is correct, but we have the real thing."
>
> Heber C. Kimball – Heber C. Kimball and Family, The Nauvoo Years. Brigham Young University Studies. 1975, p.458

Freemason historians cite its origins to the late 14th to the early 15th century in Scotland as a trade guild, not 950 BC in Jerusalem. President Kimball and Elder Ballard appear to be mistaken about the origins of masonry and thus the Church's historical connection for the endowment ceremony.

LDS Masons

As soon as the saints erected the Nauvoo Lodge, Joseph Smith also sought membership in the fraternity because members of this family and several of the first members of the Church were Masons. Joseph Smith Sr. was a documented member in upstate New York. He was raised to the degree of Master Mason May 7, 1818, in Ontario Lodge No. 23 of Canandaigua, New York. His older brother Hyrum was a member of Mount Moriah Lodge No. 112 at Palmyra, New York.

Other prominent members include: Joseph's other brothers Samuel and William Smith, subsequent presidents of the Church: Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow, members of First Presidencies: Sidney Rigdon, William Law, John C. Bennett and Heber C. Kimball, apostles: Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Hyde and Lyman Johnson, Joseph's secretary: William Clayton, presiding bishop: Newell K. Whitney, Joseph's bodyguard: Porter Rockwell, and many more.

> "15 March 1842 Tuesday – I officiated as grand chaplain at the installation of the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons, at the Grove near the Temple. Grand Master Jonas, of Columbus, being present, a large number of people assembled on the occasion. The day was exceedingly fine; all things were done in order, and universal satisfaction was manifested. In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office."
>
> Joseph Smith – Journal 1841–1842. Also in History of the Church, vol.4, p.550

Just seven weeks after his initiation as a first-degree mason, on April 4, 1842, Joseph introduces the endowment ceremony in the upper room of his red brick store; the same room where his Masonic initiation took place. Present were Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, William Law, Heber C. Kimball, and others.

Similarities between Masonic rituals and the LDS Temple Ceremony

What exactly was Joseph Smith exposed to during his initiation and is it possible that any of it made its way into the endowment ceremony that he introduced just weeks later? Three books on Freemasonry [illegible]iam M. Morgan, Jabez Richardson, and Malcolm C. Duncan reveal all of the rituals used in Masonic temple ceren[illegible]ey show that the words, actions, and symbols used LDS temple ordinances have nearly identical Masonic sources. [illegible]a collection of those that

Top

bare the most striking resemblances. (Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity, 1827. Monitor of Free-Masonry, 1860. Masonic Ritual and Monitor, 1866)

Compass and Square

Masonic compass and square: "The candidate then enters, the Senior Deacon at the same time pressing his left breast with the point of the compass…As he enters, the angle of the square is pressed against his right breast"

LDS sign of the compass and square: "Corresponding marks are found in your individual garment. On the right is the mark of the square. … On the left is the mark of the compass"

Washing and Anointing

Masonic washing ceremony: "Master orders the basin of the perfumed water and a clean napkin to be brought to him, and directs candidate to wash his hands, which he does … Master takes a box of perfumed ointment and anoints candidate on his head, eyes, mouth, heart, the tip of his right ear, hand, foot."

LDS initiatory: "Having authority, I wash you preparatory to your receiving your anointings. I anoint your head … your ears … your eyes … your nose … your lips … your neck … your shoulders … your back … your breast … your vitals and bowels … your arms and hands … your loins … your legs and feet…".

Apron

Masonic apron: "I now present you with a lambskin or white Entered Apprentice's apron which is an emblem of innocence."

LDS apron: "See, you are naked. Take you fig leaves and make you aprons."

New Name

Masonic new name: "I also present you with a new name; it is _____."

LDS new name: "I give you a new name which is never to be divulged to anyone expect at a certain place and time shown you. The I shall give you is _____ . "

Tokens

Masonic: Grip of Entered Apprentice

Masonic: Real Grip of Fe aft

LDS: First Token of the Aaronic priesthood

LDS: Second Token of the c priesthood

Top

Signs

Masonic: Due-guard of the Fellow Craft Mason.

LDS: Sign of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Masonic: DSign of the Fellow Craft Mason

LDS: Sign of the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood.

Masonic: Due-guard of the Master Mason.

LDS: Sign of the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Masonic: Sign of Grand Hailing Distress

LDS: Sign of the Second Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Top

Penalties – Removed from LDS temple endowment in April 1990.

Masonic penalty sign of an Entered Apprentice and Oath: "Made from the due-guard by dropping the left hand carelessly; at the same time raise the right arm and draw the hand, still open, across the throat, thumb next to the throat, and drop the hand perpendicular by the side."

"Binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots."

LDS penalty of the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood and Oath: "The execution of the Penalty is represented by placing the thumb under the left ear, the palm of the hand down, and by drawing the thumb quickly across the throat to the right ear, and dropping the hand to the side."

"We, and each of us, covenant and promise that we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign, or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by our roots."

Masonic penalty of the Fellow Craft: "Having my left breast torn open, my heart plucked out, and given to the wild beasts of the field and the fowls of the air."

LDS penalty of the Second Token of the Aaronic Priesthood: "We agree to have our breasts cut open and our hearts and vitals torn from our

bodies and given to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field."

Masonic penalty of the Master Mason: "To have my body cut in two, my bowels removed and burned to ashes which are then to be

Top

scattered to the four winds of heaven."

LDS penalty of the First Token of the Melchizedek Priesthood: "Should we do so, we agree that our bodies be cut asunder in the midst and all our bowels gush out."

Instructions at the Veil

Masonic Mallet: (pictured)

LDS Mallet: "The person is brought to this point, and the worker gives three distinct taps with the mallet. Whereupon, The Lord parts the Veil, and asks, " What is wanted?"

Masonic Instructions: "The Master and candidate holding each other by the grip, as before described, the Master says…"

Q. What is this?
A. A grip.

Q. A grip of what?
A. The grip of an Entered Apprentice Mason.

Q. Has it a name?
A. It has.

Q. Will you give it to me?
A. I did not so receive it, neither can I so impart it.

LDS INSTRUCTIONS AT THE VEIL: "Present him at the veil and his request shall be granted…"

Q. What is that?
A. The second token of the Melchizedek priesthood.

Q. Has it a name?
A. It has.

Q. Will you give it to me?
A. I cannot, for I have not yet received it.

Top

Masonic Symbol Usage

Bees and the Beehive

> Industry was the employment of a very large number of men, tens of thousands in many instances, on one undertaking at one place and at the same time period. Where a modern builder looks to machines as the means to accomplish his results, the Medieval builder who had no power-driven machines had to look to men. It was for such reason that Medieval Freemasons thought much about and had a wide knowledge of the forms of work.
>
> The general organization of a Lodge is based on the principle of forms of work. An emblem of work, called industry, is the Beehive. Hence looking at the regulated labor of these insects when congregated in their hive, it is not surprising that a beehive should have been deemed an appropriate emblem of systematized industry. Freemasonry has therefore adopted the beehive as a symbol of industry.
>
> Albert G. Mackey – Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, 1895

All Seeing Eye

> Masonic – "The open eye was selected as a symbol of watchfulness and care of the universe. The All-Seeing Eye may then be considered as a symbol of God manifested in his omnipresence, his guardian and his preserving character."
>
> Albert G. Mackey – Encyc of Freemasonry, 1894
>
> LDS – "The Salt Lake temple is reportedly the singly visual symbol that most au mmunicates "Mormon"

Top

to others. Overwhelmed by the building itself, people may not realize how extensive the ornamentation is … on the east and west center towers with accompanying stones representing an all-seeing eye and clasped hands." "The all seeing eye is a symbol of God's protection and omnipresence."

The Salt Lake Temple, Ensign, Jan, 1978 and
Gerald E. Hansen – Sacred Walls: Learning From
Temple Symbols, Deseret Book, 2009

Sun, Moon, and Stars

Masonic – The book 'Heaven and its Wonders and Hell From Things Heard and Seen' by Emanuel Swedenborg, a Freemason, was first published in America in 1812. He uses the sun, moon, and stars to describe varying degrees of heavenly relationships with the Lord, the closest being named the Celestial Kingdom. "In the Celestial Kingdom the light appears flaming because the angels there receive light from the Lord as a sun; but in the spiritual kingdom, the light is shining white because the angels there receive light from the Lord as a moon … but those that are in hell turn themselves to opposite darkness and dense darkness."

Emanuel Swedenborg – Heaven and Hell, Ch.5 – There Are Three Heavens, p.28

LDS – "Latter-day revelation confirms the teaching of the Bible on these matters and verifies that there are three general categories or glories to which the members of the human family will be assigned in their judgment following their resurrection from the grave. These are known as [illegible]elestial, Terrestrial and Telestial Kingdoms, of which the sun, moon, and stars are spoken of as being

Top

LDS.org/scriptures/bd/degrees-of-glory

Context

March 15, 1842 – Joseph Smith became a Freemason in his general business office.
History of the Church, vol.4, p.551

May 4, 1842 – Joseph instructed the other leaders on the washings, anointing, signs, and tokens.
History of the Church, vol.5, p.2

Parallels between Freemasonry and the LDS endowment appear to be problematic. It seems that every LDS temple ceremony has a nearly identical masonic ceremony with the corresponding words, token, sign and symbol. This begs the question – Could Joseph Smith have simply borrowed this "revelation"?

Chapter 7
Polygamy

Top

What kind of motivations could a man have to wed many women? By some estimates Joseph married up to 52 women

from a growing group of people that intensely admired him and that he held great influence over. For unspecified reasons his polygamy is never addressed in the Church education system, yet when studied in detail, problems appear concerning the timeline that Joseph began this practice, the secretive nature with subsequent denial, and the types of women married.

Timeline

An issue arises when we compare the date of the revelation to begin polygamy and the dates of Joseph's marriages.

> Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132
> Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded **July 12, 1843**, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of plural marriage.
>
> (The Church has recently amended this heading to include, "evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831." What they fail to clarify is that the 1831 revelation shows that Joseph instructed some elders to "take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites, that their posterity may become white, delightsome" Letter from W.W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Historians Office.)

In 1833 Fanny Alger became Joseph's first marriage after Emma – **ten years** before the official revelation. At the time, Fanny was living in the Smith home, helping Emma with housework and the children. A family friend, one of Brigham Young's plural wives, recalls,

> "Mrs. Smith had an adopted daughter, a very pretty, pleasing young girl, about seventeen years old. She was extremely fond of her; no mother could be more devoted, and their affection for each other was a constant object of remark, so absorbing and genuine did it seem. Consequently, it was with a shocked surprise that the people heard that sister Emma had turned Fanny out of the house in the night…By degrees, it became whispered about that Joseph's love for his adopted daughter was by no means a paternal affection, and his wife discovering the fact, at once took measures to place the girl beyond his reach. Since Emma refused decidedly to allow her to remain in her house … my mother offered to take her until she could be sent to her relatives"
>
> Ann Eliza Webb Young- Wife No. 19, 1875

Oliver Cowdery also addresses this situation when he noted his extreme displeasure regarding Joseph's conduct with Fanny Alger while married to Emma. In a letter to his brother, Warren A. Cowdery, Oliver wrote:

> "We had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deserted from the truth in that matter and as I supposed was admitted by himself."
>
> Oliver Cowdery – Far West, Missouri, January 21, 1839

Even with Oliver's important role in the formation of the Church, Joseph could not allow his affairs to become public. The issue of polygamy divided Oliver and Joseph so wide that Joseph turned Oliver out of the Church after his unceasing disapproval of the practice.

Top

Secrets and Denial

Additional marriages were kept secret and when word began to spread Joseph turned to outright denial.

Emily and Eliza Partridge

Emily and Eliza were the daughters of the first bishop of the Church, Edward Partridge. When he passed away, his daughters Emily (16) and Eliza (20) sought work as maids to help support their family. Emily recalls:

> "The first door that opened for us was to go to Smith's, which we accepted." "[I was] a nurse girl, for they had a young baby … Joseph and Emma were very kind to us; they were almost like a father and mother, and I loved Emma and the children." "the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family … We had been there about a year when the principle of plural marriage was made known to us, and I was married to Joseph Smith on the 4th of March 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the ceremony. My sister Eliza was also married to Joseph a few days later. This was done without the knowledge of Emma Smith. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence … From that very hour, however, Emma was our bitter enemy. We remained in the family several months after this, but things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home."
>
> Emily Dow Partridge – Dairy March 19, 1982, L. Tomy Perry special collection, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU

Sarah Ann Whitney

Joseph sought to add 17 year-old Sarah Ann Whitney to his growing collection of wives. Joseph penned a letter divulging his feelings for her.

> "…my feelings are so strong for you since what has passed lately between us…it seems, as if I could not live long in this way; and if you three would come and see me…it would afford me great relief…I know it is the will of God that you should comfort me now in this time of affliction…the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety…burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all locked up in your breasts…You will pardon me for my earnestness on this subject when you consider how lonesome I must be…I think Emma wont come tonight if she don't fail to come tonight…"
>
> Joseph Smith – George Albert Smith Family Papers, Early Smith Documents, 1731-1849 , Marriott Library, University of Utah

Joseph had to convince her parents to allow the secret marriage. There had to be compensation. Six weeks after the secret sealing, Joseph deeded to Sarah a lot of land only one block from his home. It was rare for a woman to own land in Nauvoo, especially a woman as young as Sarah. A large issue soon arose. As a secret l[illegible]he prophet, she was not available for courtship any longer. Appearing single while refusing suitors was bound to ra[illegible]cions. Joseph decided to arrange a civil marriage between Sarah and recent widower, Joseph C. Kingsbury. Thi[illegible]make it seem as though Sarah was no longer available. Joseph Smith officiated over what Kingsbury later called [illegible]ded marriage" between

Top

Sarah was no longer available. Joseph Smith officiated over what Kingsbury later called a "pretended marriage" between him and Sarah the following month.

> "On the 29th of April 1843 I, according to President Joseph Smith … agreed to stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as supposed to be her husband and had a pretended marriage."
>
> Joseph C. Kingsbury – Journal, p.13, Boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JCKingsbury.html

1835 Statement on Marriage

While still before the official revelation on plural marriage in 1843, an early edition of the Doctrine and Covenants reprints a statement by Joseph addressing the public's concern with his illegal practice of polygamy:

> "Statement on Marriage. August 17, 1835. Inasmuch as this Church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."
>
> Josephsmithpapers.org/papersummary/doctrine-andcovenants-1844?p=441

This passage has since been removed from later editions of the D&C. Why would Joseph mention that the Church was accused of the crime of polygamy in 1835 when supposedly God didn't reveal this practice until 1843? Probably because by the time that Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants was written, Joseph had wed 29 women by his own desire.

1844 Statement on Marriage

As late as 1844 Joseph continued to deny his involvement in polygamy despite having well over 30 wives by this point.

> "I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel before it was reported that I had seven wives…I wish the grand jury would tell me who they are – whether it will be a curse or a blessing to me. I am quite tired of the fools asking me…What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago, and I can prove them all perjurers."
>
> Joseph Smith – Nauvoo, History of the Church, May 26, 1844, vol.6, pp.410-411

The Women

Due to the secretive nature of Joseph's affairs, the actual total number of wives Joseph took is unclear. Written records, primary accounts, and second-hand accounts put the number between 29-52 women. Most disturbing was the fact that many of these women were either already married, much younger, related to each other, or a combination.

Top

Married

Record show at least 13 women were married to other men at the time Joseph took them for his wives. He sent several men on missions for the Church then married their wives, or married their wives in secret and then sent the husbands on missions afterward.

Marinda Nancy Johnson-Hyde-Smith

In September 1831, Joseph and Emma Smith moved in with the Johnson family while Joseph and Sidney Rigdon worked on translating the Bible. While staying with the Johnsons in March 1832, Joseph Smith was dragged out by a mob and tarred and feathered. Marinda's brother Eli led the mob because he felt that Joseph had been too intimate with Marinda. Soon Marinda married apostle Orson Hyde. On April 6, 1840, Orson was sent on a 3 year mission to Jerusalem. Shortly after his departure, Joseph married his wife Nancy Marinda Johnson-Hyde while Orson was gone. In Joseph Smith's journal, in a list of his marriages, he wrote: "Apr 42 Marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith." Later Orson and Marinda separated.

Zina Diantha Huntington-Jacobs

Zina was 18 when her mother died and after went to live in the Smiths' home. Soon she met Joseph's friend, Henry Jacobs. Joseph was to officiate their wedding but never showed. Instead, Bishop John C. Bennett performed the marriage. Later, Zina asked Joseph why he didn't show,

> "He told her it had been made known to him that she was to be his Celestial Wife and he could not give to another one who had been given to him."
>
> Henry Jacobs, History of Henry Bailey Jacobs

During Henry and Zina's marriage, Joseph sent Henry on 8 missions. At one point Joseph sent a message to Zina through her brother Dimick. It read,

> "Tell Zina I have put it off and put it off until an angel with a drawn sword has stood before me and told me if I did not establish that principle and live it, I would lose my position and my life and the Church could progress no further."
>
> Joseph Smith – Zina D.H.Smith, Joseph the Prophet: His Life and Mission as Viewed by Intimate Acquaintances, January 18, 1895, p.21

After four proposals and pressured with the responsibility for the life of the prophet, Zina finally accepted.

After Joseph's death, Brigham Young also took Zina for his wife while she was still married to Henry Jacobs. Brigham called Henry to serve a mission in England and told him to find another wife. While Henry was gone, Zina began living at the Young house with her children and soon bore a child with Brigham.

Top

Vilate Kimball

> "Shortly after Heber's return from England, he was introduced to the doctrine of plural marriage directly through a startling test. He had already sacrificed homes, possessions, friends, relatives, all worldly rewards, peace, and tranquility for the Restoration. Nothing was left to place on the altar save his life, his children, and his wife. Then came the Abrahamic test. Joseph demanded for himself what to Heber was the unthinkable, his Vilate. Totally crushed spiritually and emotionally, Heber touched neither food nor water for three days and three nights and continually sought confirmation and comfort from God. On the evening of the third day, some kind of assurance came, and Heber took Vilate to the upper room of Joseph's store on Water Street. The Prophet wept at this act of faith, devotion, and obedience. Joseph never intended to take Vilate. It was all a test."
>
> Heber C. Kimball – Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer by Stanley B. Kimball, p.93

Teenagers

Ten of Joseph's wives were teenagers with a 10-23 year age difference between them.

Helen Mar Kimball-Smith

Instead of taking Heber C. Kimball's wife, Vilate, as Joseph had done with others, he married Heber's 14-year-old daughter, Helen, in May of 1843. The Church confirmed this fact in the essay "Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo" when it states that,

> "The youngest was Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Joseph's close friends Heber C. and Vilate Murray

Top

Kimball, who was sealed to Joseph several months before her 15th birthday."

Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo, LDS.org, Oct. 2014

"My father asked me if I would believe him if he told me that it was right for married men to take other wives, my sensibilities were painfully touched, for to mention such a thing to me I thought altogether unworthy of my father. And as quick as he spoke, I replied to him shortly and emphatically, "No I wouldn't.

"But having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet Joseph, my father offered me to him. My father had but one ewe lamb and willingly laid me upon the altar. How cruel this seemed to my mother whose heartstrings were already stretched until they were ready to snap asunder.

"Then father asked me if I would be sealed to Joseph and left me to reflect upon it for the next 24 hours. Joseph then came to me and said that if I will take this step it will ensure my eternal salvation and that of my father's household and all of our kindred. His promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward.

"None but God and his angels could see my mother's bleeding heart when Joseph asked her if she was willing, she replied, "If Helen is willing, I have nothing more to say." She had witnessed the sufferings of others who were older and who better understood the step they were taking, bit to see her child, who had yet seen her 15th summer, follow the same thorny path [of polygamy], in her mind she saw the misery which was as sure to come as the sun was to rise.

"I would never have been sealed to Joseph had I known it was anything more than a ceremony. I was young and they deceived me by saying the salvation of our whole family depended on it."

Helen Mar Kimball – Journal, Women's Exponent, vol. 9-10, 1880 and
Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons, 1848

Joseph told a reluctant Helen Mar Kimball that if she married him it would ensure her salvation and the salvation of all her family. Imagine the burden on a 14-year-old girl's emotions of salvation for her entire family riding on accepting Joseph's proposal.

Nancy Winchester

While records show Nancy was married to Joseph, no dates were written. At the time of Joseph's death, Nancy was 15 years old. It is possible that, like Helen Mar Kimball, Nancy could have been 14.

Unlike what is commonly taught in Sunday school lessons, marriages to young teenagers were not common in pioneer days.

"In 1890, when the U.S. Census Bureau started collecting marriage data, it was recorded that the average age of a first marriage for men was 26 years, and the average age of marria[illegible]omen was 22 years."

Classroom.synonym.com/ager[illegible]-us-1800s-23174.html

Top

Pairs of Sisters

Emily Dow Partridge and Eliza Maria Partridge
Sara Lawrence and Maria Lawrence
Zina Huntington Jacobs and Presidia Huntington Buell

Mothers and Daughters

Patty Bartlett Sessions (Mother) and Sylvia Sessions Lyon (Daughter)

The Outcome

Polygamy upset many of the early leaders of the Church, including 2nd Councilor in the First Presidency, William Law. Joseph Smith excommunicated William for protesting his attempt to start a romantic relationship with William's wife, Jane.

> "Smith made his visit to his wife in the middle of the night when he knew her husband to be absent. Joseph had asked her to give him half her love; she was at liberty to keep the other half for her husband."
>
> Ann Eliza Young – Wife No. 19, 1876, p.61

After his excommunication, William spoke out against Joseph's practice of taking secret wives while Joseph continued to publicly imply that he had only one wife. William Law then started a newspaper called the Nauvoo Expositor. In print, he spoke of the polygamous affairs of Joseph Smith. This led to an emergency session of the Nauvoo city council; of which Joseph was mayor. In this session Joseph ordered the printing press be destroyed.

> "To the Marshal of said City, greeting. You are here commanded to destroy the printing press from whence issues the Nauvoo Expositor, and pi the type of said printing establishment in the street, and burn all the Expositors and libelous handbills found in said establishment; and if resistance be offered to your execution of this order by the owners or others, demolish the house; and if anyone threatens you or the mayor or the officers of the city, arrest those who threaten you, and fail not to execute this order without delay, and make due return hereon. By order of the City Council, Joseph Smith, Mayor."
>
> Joseph Smith – History of the Church, vol.6, p.448

In his book, Carthage Conspiracy, Elder Dallin H. Oaks recounts the events of Joseph's executive order.

> "Joseph Smith, acting as mayor, ordered the city marshal to destroy the newspaper and press without delay and instructed the major general of the Nauvoo Legion to have the militia assi
>
> Dallin H. Oa age Conspiracy, p.15

Top

Chief of Police Johnathan Dunham and City Marshal John Greene, leading the mob of over 200 saints, armed with muskets, knives pistols, converged on William Law's brick office. They broke open the door with a sledgehammer and found Chauncey Higbee and Charles Foster inside the building. Higbee and Foster put up no resistance as Joseph's men trashed the interior of the newly built building.

> "They tumbled the press and materials into the street, and set fire to them, and demolished the machinery with a sledgehammer, and injured the building very materially. We made no resistance, but looked on and felt revenge, but leave it for the public to avenge this climax of insult and injury."
>
> Charles Foster – Warsaw Signal, June 12, 1844

After destroying William Law's $2,000 letterpress, the mob of saints tossed the entire contents of William's office into the street and set it on fire. The mob then made their way to Joseph's home to report their actions.

> "About 8 pm, the Marshal returned and reported that he had removed the press, type, printed paper, and fixtures into the street, and destroyed them. The posse accompanied by some hundreds of the citizens, returned with the Marshal to the front of the mansion, when I gave them a short address, and told them they had done right. I then blessed them in the name of the Lord. This speech was loudly greeted by the assembly with three-times-cheers. The posse and assembly then dispersed all in good order."
>
> Joseph Smith – History of the Church, vol6, ch.21

William Law was in the city of Carthage at the time and later wrote that he did not believe what he heard until he rode his horse to Nauvoo and "rode over our type and broken furniture."

> "[Governor] Ford wrote Smith on the next day, denouncing the city's proceedings as unlawful and demanding that those involved in the move against the 'Expositor' submit to the processes of the law at Carthage."
>
> Dallin H. Oaks – Carthage Conspiracy, p.16

The result of his actions put Joseph Smith in prison for the last time.

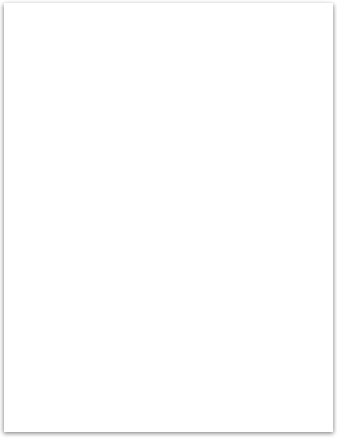
Context

Top

Members have been taught that the times Joseph Smith spent incarcerated in jails were because Satan stirred up the hearts of men to falsely imprison him, yet nothing is ever said of the actual crimes committed by Joseph and his followers. Joseph's increasingly public acts of illegal polygamy, combined with the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor and rising tensions between the Nauvoo militia and the state of Illinois, caused his last incarceration.

The actions of Joseph Smith raise several troubling concerns. Why would the prophet begin taking wives 10 years before receiving the official revelation? Why did he send men on missions and marry their wives? Why did he marry girls as young as 14 when he was nearly 40? Why would his closest friends take such great issue with his actions? Why does Joseph try to hide these actions from his wife, Emma? And why did he react so violently to those that tried to make his actions public? Does polygamy seem to be truly ordained of God?

Chapter 8
Race and the Church



"Cain slew his brother… and the lord put a mark upon on him, which is the flat nose and black skin… If the white man, who belongs to the chosen seed, mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of god, is death on the spot. This will always be so. "

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses
vol. 7. pp. 290-291, vol. 10,p.110

For over 150 years the Church has taught and sustained racially prejudiced doctrines while attributing these actions to the will of God. These teachings include a ban on black members from holding the priesthood and participating in the temple, and went as far as preaching death as a consequence for inter-race marriage. Recently, the Church has tried to clean up this part of its image by disavowing these past teachings.

Racist Teachings

President Brigham Young

"Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white m gs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, on the spot. This will

Top

always be so."

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.10, p.110

"How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam's children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed."

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.7, p.290

"You may inquire of the intelligent of the world whether they can tell why the aborigines of this country are dark, loathsome, ignorant, and sunken into the depths of degradation …When the Lord has a people, he makes covenants with them and gives unto them promises: then, if they transgress his law, change his ordinances, and break his covenants he has made with them, he will put a mark upon them, as in the case of the Lamanites and other portions of the house of Israel; but by-and-by they will become a white and delightsome people.

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.7, pp.335-338

"You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind."

Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.7, pp.282-291

President George Albert Smith

"The attitude of the Church with reference to Negroes remains as it has always stood. It is not a matter of the declaration of a policy but of direct commandment from the Lord, on which is founded the doctrine of the Church from the days of its organization, to the effect that Negroes may become members of the Church but that they are not entitled to the priesthood at the present time … The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the pre-mortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality."

George Albert Smith – Statement by the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on the Negro Question,August 17, 1949

President Joseph Fielding Smith

"That negro race, for instance, have been placed under restrictions because of their attitude in the world of spirits, few will doubt. It cannot be looked upon as just that they should be deprived of the power of the Priesthood without it being a punishment for some act, or acts, performed before they were born."

Joseph Fielding Smith – The Way to Perfection, 1940

"Not only was Cain called upon to suffer, but because of his wickedness he b[illegible]e father of an inferior race. A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued throu[illegible]neage and must do so while time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with[illegible]k skin and have been

Top

denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain."

Joseph Fielding Smith – The Way to Perfection, 1940

Apostle Mark E. Peterson

"We must not inter-marry with the Negro. Why? If I were to marry a Negro woman and have children by her, my children would all be cursed as to the priesthood. Do I want my children cursed as to the priesthood? If there is one drop of Negro blood in my children, as I have read to you, they receive the curse. There isn't any argument, therefore, as to inter-marriage with the Negro, is there? There are 50 million Negroes in the United States. If they were to achieve complete absorption with the white race, think what that would do."

Mark E. Peterson – Race Problems as They Affect the Church, address given at BYU, August 27, 1954. Marriott Library University of Utah, Mark E. Peterson Papers

"In spite of all he did in the pre-existent life, the Lord is willing, if the Negro accepts the gospel with real, sincere faith, and is really converted, to give him the blessings of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If that Negro is faithful all his days, he can and will enter the celestial kingdom. He will go there as a servant"

Mark E. Peterson – Race Problems as They Affect the Church, address given at BYU, August 27, 1954. Marriott Library University of Utah, Mark E. Peterson Papers

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie

"Negroes in this life are denied the Priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them…Negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularlythe priesthood and the temple blessings that flow there from, but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is the Lord's doing, is based on his eternal laws of justice, and grows out of the lack of Spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate."

Bruce R. McConkie – Mormon Doctrine, 1966, pp.527-528

President David O. McKay

"The seeming discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God… Revelation assures us that this plan antedates man's mortal existence, extending back to man's preexistent state."

Pres. David O. McKay – Hugh B. Brown, N. Eldon Tanner – Letter of the first Presidency Church's Position on the Negro – Dec. 15, 1969, The Improvement Era, Feb. 1970, p.71

Slavery

"I will remark with regard to slavery, inasmuch as we believe in the Bible, i as we believe in the ordinances of God, in the priesthood and order and decrees of God, we ve in slavery. I am a

ordinances of God, in the priesthood and order and decrees of God, we must believe in slavery. I am a firm believer in slavery."

Brigham Young – Address to joint session of legislature, January 23, 1852
Recorded by George D. Watt, Historian's Office Reports
of Speeches, Church History Library, Salt lake city, Utah

Seeing California as an abundant supply source for Utah, in 1851, President Brigham Young sent a company of 437 saints, lead by Apostles Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich, to settle in Rancho San Bernardino, California. This company included a large number of slaves.

"As respects [to] slavery in the territory, we were assured that there was little of it there, yet it is there. Some slaves had been liberated by their owners since they were taken to Utah; others still remain slaves. But the most of those who take slaves there pass over with them in a little while to San Bernardino, a Mormon settlement in California … How many slaves are now held there they could not say, but the number relatively was by no means small. A single person had taken between forty and fifty, and many had gone in with smaller numbers."

The Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star – 1855, vol.17, p.63

Civil Rights

In February of 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination according to race, religion, or sex. Four years later, Rev. Martin Luther King was martyred for his role as a leader in the movement. After his death, black preachers continued to call for full integration of blacks into white restrooms, buses, schools, jobs, and neighborhoods. As a church claiming to be led by Jesus Christ himself, I would expect it to be on the front line in the fight for equal rights for all people. Instead the Church did nothing; in fact, they actually tried to prevent it. In January 1964, member of the Quorum of the 12 Apostles, Delbert L. Stapley, wrote to LDS Michigan Governor, George Romney. Governor Romney would later campaign to be President of the United States, as did his son, Mitt Romeny. In his letter, Elder Stapley urged Governor Romney not to support the Civil Rights Act as it would bring the integration of blacks into society.

"I am sure you know that the Prophet Joseph Smith, in connection with the Negro problem of this country, proposed to Congress that they sell public lands and buy up the Negro slaves and transport them back to Africa from whence they came. I am sure the Prophet, with his vision and understanding, foresaw the problems we are faced with today with this race, which caused him to promo[illegible]rogram. When I reflect upon the Prophet's statements and remember what happened to three of our[illegible]s presidents who were very active in the Negro cause, I am sobered by their demise. They went c[illegible]o the teachings of the

Top

> Prophet Joseph Smith unwittingly, no doubt, but nevertheless, the prophecy of JosephSmith, "those who are determined to pursue a course, which shows an opposition, and a feverish restlessness against the decrees of the Lord, will learn, when perhaps it is too late for their own good, that God can do His own work, without the aid of those who are not dictated by His counsel," has and will continue to be fulfilled."
>
> Delbert L. Stapley – Letter to Gov. George Romney, January 23, 1964
> Archive.org/stream/DelbertStapleyLetter/delbert-stapley_Letter#page/n0/mode/2up

In his letter, Elder Stapley warned Governor Romney that support for civil rights was against the will of the Lord as revealed through Joseph Smith. Stapley further cautioned that punishments are in store for those who seek equality in such ways. As evidence for such dire warnings, Stapley wrote that three U. S. Presidents who had fought for equality and civil rights met an untimely death – Lincoln and Kennedy by assassination and Grant by cancer.

President Ezra Taft Benson gave a talk in general conference after the passing of the Civil Rights Act and before the Church changed its stance on the issue:

> "There is no doubt that the so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America."
>
> President Ezra Taft Benson – Trust Not in the Arm of Flesh,
> General Conference, Ensign, October 1967

The Civil Rights Act brought equal treatment for all people in this country and ended legal segregation. To refer to it as "the so-called civil rights movement" is to belittle its great significance. Remember, this was at the height of the ColdWar between the U.S. and Russia and to refer to someone or something as communist during this time was an extremely derogatory and dangerous statement. President Benson does not sound like the Lord's prophet bringing a message of love. It seems that the basis of these prejudice doctrines may have began with the culture of racism held by early general authorities and perpetuated by the following leaders until the direction the nation was moving forced the hand of the Church.

Distancing Itself From the Past

Published in 2013 on LDS.org is an article named, Race and the Priesthood.

> "Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects actions in a premortal life; that mixedrace marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else."
>
> Race and the Priesthood – December 6, 2013.
> LDS.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng

This latest manifesto is shocking for the rejection of teachings by past prophets as just "theories." Contained in this quote from the article, the Church blatantly contradicts itself when disavowing:

"…that black skin is a sign of disfavor or curse…"

> "A curse was placed upon him and that curse has been continued through his and must do so while

Top

time endures. Millions of souls have come into this world cursed with a black skin and have been denied the privilege of Priesthood and the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel. These are the descendants of Cain."

President Joseph Fielding Smith

"…that it reflects actions in a premortal life…"

"The position of the Church regarding the Negro may be understood when another doctrine of the church is kept in mind, namely, that the conduct of spirits in the premortal existence has some determining effect upon the conditions and circumstances under which these spirits take on mortality."

President George Albert Smith

"… that mixed-race marriages are a sin…"

"If the white man belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot."

President Brigham Young

"…that blacks…are inferior in any way to anyone else…"

"…some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind."

President Brigham Young

With this article, the Church disavows 4 points of doctrine that have been in place for 150 years and invalidates the words of the prophets by calling their teachings just "theories."

Follow The Prophet

The Church reminds us to give strict obedience to the prophet because he speaks for God and is incapable of misconduct.

"The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty."

President Wilford Woodruff- General Conference, October 1890

"Keep your eye on the Prophet, for the Lord will never permit his Prophet to lead this Church astray."

President Ezra Taft Benson- General Conference, October 1966

"Follow your leaders who have been duly ordained and have been publicly sustained, and you will not be led astray."

Elder Boyd K. Packer- Gene erence, October 1992

Top

"Follow the prophet, follow the prophet, Follow the prophet; don't go astray. Follow the prophet, follow the prophet, Follow the prophet; he knows the way."

Children's Songbook

Today the Church says the past leaders were in error because their statements were just "theories". Applying the idea that the priesthood ban on blacks was just a theory also doesn't make much sense when considering what Pres. David O. McKay stated, *"...discrimination by the Church toward the Negro is not something which originated with man; but goes back into the beginning with God."*

If prophets claim to speak the will of Heavenly Father when their words can be later disavowed, then how was it that they were prophets at all? This completely undermines the 'prophet will never lead us astray' principle. What doctrines currently attributed to God by today's prophet can be discredited as just "theories" by future general authorities?

Chapter 9
Blood Atonement

"Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their bloodshed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf. This is scriptural doctrine, and is taught in all the standard works of the Church."

President Joseph Fielding Smith – Doctrines of Salvati 4, vol. 1, pp.135-136

Top

Brigham Young

Brigham Young took the doctrine of blood atonement even further. While Joseph might have emphasized the practice of blood atonement against sinful Mormons, Brigham inspired his followers to murder in God's name both Mormons and non-Mormons alike.

> "Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them. You would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the Kingdom of God. I would at once do so, in such a case; and under the circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands.... There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.1, pp.108-109

> "All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers and sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, pp.219-20

> "There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world ... I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine; but it is to save them, not to destroy them."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.4, p.53

> "This is loving your neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.4, p.220

Along with Porter Rockwell, William Hickman was bodyguard to Joseph Smith then Brigham Young. In his autobiography, Hickman confessed that he was often tasked by Brigham to take the lives of men.

> "I found him, used him up, scalped him, and took his scalp to Brigham Young ... He took it and thanked me very much. This was my first act of violence under the rule of Brigham Young."
>
> William Hickman – The Autobiography of William Hickman, Brigham's Destroying Angel: The Life Confessions and Startling Disclosures, Salt Lake City, 1872, p.47

Top

After feeling remorse later in his life, Hickman confessed his crimes to R. N. Baskin, mayor of Salt Lake City and member of the Utah Supreme Court. Justice Baskins states,

"The Danites were an organization in the Mormon church. Its existence was stated by Bill Hickman in his confession made to me. He stated that the members were bound by their covenants to execute the orders of the priesthood, and that when a direct order or intimation was given to 'use up' anyone, it was always executed by one or more of the members. Hickman confessed to me that he personally knew of thirteen persons having been murdered, some of them by him … that at one time he murdered a man by the name of Buck at the personal request of Brigham Young."

R.N. Baskin Reminiscences of Early Utah, 1914, p150

Heber C. Kimball

"If men turn traitors to God and His servants, their blood will surely be shed, or else they will be damned, and that too according to their covenants."

Heber C. Kimball, Journal of Discourses, vol.4, p.375

"Judas was like salt that had lost its saving principles—good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men…. It is so with you, ye Elders of Israel, when you forfeit your covenants…. I know the day is right at hand when men will forfeit their Priesthood and turn against us and against the covenants they have made, and they will be destroyed as Judas was."

Heber C. Kimball – Journal of Discourses, vol.6, pp.125-26

"These are my views, and the Lord knows that I believe in the principles of sanctification; and when I am guilty of seducing any man's wife, or any woman in God's world, I say, sever my head from my body."

Heber C. Kimball – Journal of Discourses, vol.7, p.20

Jebediah M. Grant

"I say, there are men and women that I would advise to go to the Presidency immediately, and ask him to appoint a committee to attend to their care; and then let a place be selected, and let that committee shed their blood. We have amongst us that are full of all manner of abominations, those who need to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are too deep a dye … I believe that there are a great many; and if they are covenant breakers we need a place designated, where we can shed their blood … Brethren and sisters, we want you to repent and forsake your sins. And you who have committed sins that cannot be forgiven through baptism, let your blood be shed, and let the smoke ascend, that the incense thereof may come up before God as an atonement for your sins, and that the sinners in Zion may be afraid."

Apostle Jebediah M. Grant – 2nd counselor to Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, vol.4, pp.49-51

Joseph Fielding Smith

"Certain sins are so grievous that man may commit, that the blood of Christ v eanse them from their

Top

> sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf. This is scriptural doctrine, and is taught in all the standard works of the Church."
>
> Joseph Fielding Smith – Doctrines of Salvation, 1954, vol.1, pp.135 136

This is horrifying! Lives have been taken under the direction of the Church and in the name of the Lord. Does merely claiming divine authority give someone a free pass to murder? If so, many terrorist organisations around the world that commit horrific acts in the name of God should also get a free pass. Should we feel that the Prophet Brigham Young and the early saints are justified for their actions? Imagine if Thomas S. Monson were to preach this at general conference and task local authorities to follow through with this council. It is obvious why the Church would not want this part of the history to become common knowledge. Does this practice sound like it was truly the will of a loving Heavenly Father?

Chapter 10
Prophesies

While reading through History of the Church, Journal of Discourses, books by past prophets and historical Mormon periodicals, I would occasionally come across prophesies that didn't quite make sense.

Joseph Smith – Prophesying the years of his death and Jesus' 2nd coming.

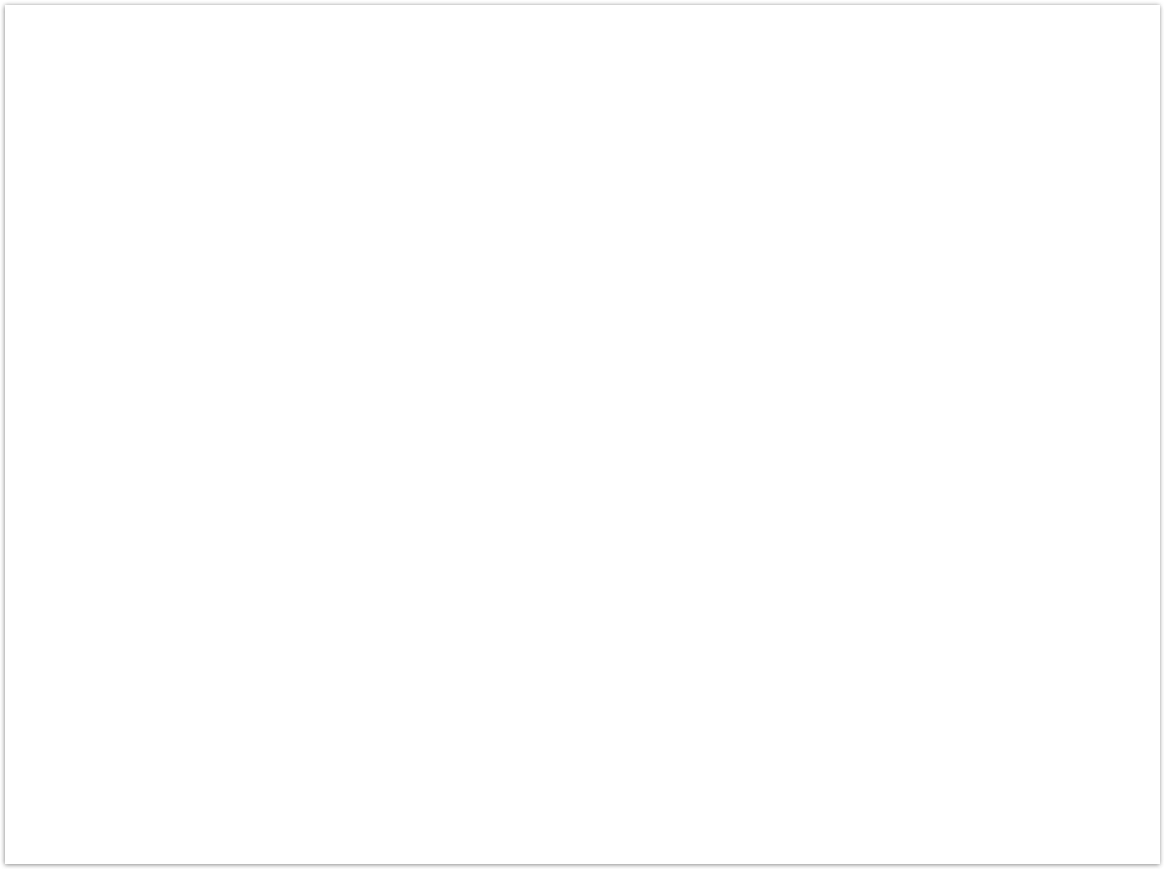
> "There are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes… I was once praying earnestly upon this subject, and a voice said unto me, "My son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years of age, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man." I prophesy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written—the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eighty-five years old. Then read the 14th chapter of Revelation, 6th and 7th verses—"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." And Hosea, 6th chapter, After two days, etc.,—2,520 years; which brings it to 1890."
>
> Joseph Smith – History of the Church, vol.5, p.336

Joseph's prophecy was mistaken in two ways: he did not live to be 85 years old and Jesus did not return in 1890.

Joseph Smith – Prophesying that moon is inhabited

Prominent early saint, Elder Oliver B. Huntington, lived with Joseph Smith in Kirtland, OH ved four missions for the Church. He wrote an article for The Young Woman's Journal, the official magazine for the Y dies Mutual Improvement Association of the Church, recounting a teaching by Joseph Smith.

Top



"Nearly all the discoveries of men in the last half century have… contributed to prove Joseph Smith to be a prophet. As far back as 1837, I know that he said the moon was inhabited by men and women the same as this earth, and that they live to a greater age than we do – that they live generally to near the age of a 1,000 years. He described the men as averaging near six feet in height, and dressing quite uniformly in something near the Quaker style."

Oliver B. Huntington – The Young Woman's Journal, vol. 03, no.6, March 1892.
Contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/YWJ/id/11651

Joseph Smith - Revelation that the Book of Mormon copyright is to be sold.

"Wherefore be diligent in securing the copyright of my work upon all the face of the Earth of which is known by you unto, my Servant Joseph, and unto him whom he willeth according as I shall command him that the faithful and the righteous may retain the temporal blessing… Behold I say unto you that I have covenanted and it pleaseth me that Oliver Cowdery Joseph Knight Hyram Page and Josiah Stowel shall do my work in this thing yea even in securing the copyright and they shall do it with an eye single to my Glory that it may be the means of bringing souls unto me salvation through mine only Begotten."

Joseph Smith - Joseph Smith Papers: A Revelation given to Oliver Cowdery, Hiram Page,
Josiah Stowell, & Joseph Knight given at Manchester, Ontario County, NY.
Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books, Pages 30-33

"Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received [illegible]tion that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy[illegible] the Book of Mormon.

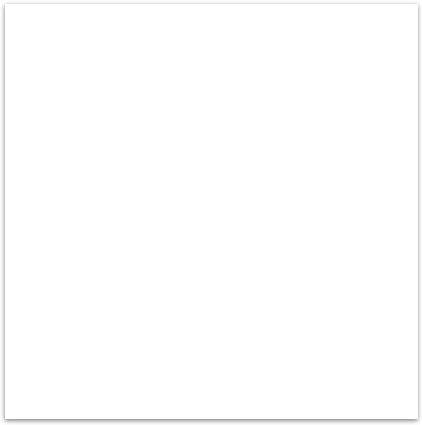
Top

> Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but they failed entirely to sell the copyright, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father's house when they returned. I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. Well, we were all in great trouble; and we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copyright, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking."
>
> David Whitmer - An Address to All Believers in Christ, 1887, p. 30-31

Brigham Young – Prophesying that sun is inhibated

> So it is with regard to the inhabitants of the sun. Do you think it is inhabited? I rather think it is. Do you think there is any life there? No question of it; it was not made in vain. It was made to give light to those who dwell upon it, and to other planets' and so will this earth when it is celestialized."
>
> Brigham Young – Journal of Discourses, vol.13, p.271

Joseph Fielding Smith – Prophesying the will never reach the moon



> "We will never get a man into space. This earth is man's sphere and it was never intended that he should get away from it. The moon is a superior planet to the earth and it was never intended that man should go there. You can write it down in your books that this will never happen."
>
> Joseph Fielding Smith – Doctrines of Salvation, 1954, vol.3, p.203

Just 15 years later on July 20, 1969, U.S. astronauts are the first men to walk on the moon.

PART 2

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Chapter 11

DNA

Top

The Book of Mormon story begins with Lehi, an Israelite, who fled to the Promised Land with his family and landed somewhere in Mesoamerica. Lehi's descendents grew into two large populations, the Lamanites and the Nephites. By AD 385 the Lamanites had destroyed the Nephites and then grew to populate the entire Americas. This unique claim lends itself perfectly to genetic testing. Studies have been performed on the genetic history of Native Americans and the resulting information reveals inconsistencies in The Book of Mormon narrative. Covered in this chapter: the Church's original claim, statements by LDS scientists, genetic evidence, and the Church's attempt to distance itself from the original position.

Original Claim

Over the years, prophets, apostles, and the missionary department have preached an ancestral link between the ancient Hebrews and Native Americans.

"It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains the fullness of the everlasting gospel. The record gives an account of two great civilisations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C., and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites. The other came much earlier when the Lord confounded the tongues at the Tower of Babel. This group is known as the Jaredites. After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians."

Book of Mormon – Introduction, 1981 edition

"Central America, or Guatemala, is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced by several hundred miles of territory from north to south. The city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood up on this land as will be seen from the following words from the Book of Alma: 'And now it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful, and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.'"

Joseph Smith – Times and Seasons, October 1, 1842, vol.3, no.23

"As I look into your faces, I think of Father Lehi, whose sons and daughters you are.... This is but the beginning of the work in Peru."

Gordon B. Hinckley – God's Holy Work in Peru, Ensign, February 1997, p.73

Top

LDS Scientists

Simon G. Southerton – Senior molecular biologist with the Commonwealth Scientific and I[illegible]esearch Organization in

Simon G. Southerton – Senior molecular biologist with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Australia and former bishop. Southerton said that genetic research allowed him to test his religious views against his professional training. He examined studies of DNA lineages among Polynesians and indigenous peoples in North, Central and South America. He mapped maternal DNA lines from 7,300 Native Americans from 175 tribes. Southerton found no trace ofMiddle Eastern DNA in the genetic strands of today's American Indians and Pacific Islanders. In Losing a Lost Tribe, published in 2004, Southerton concluded that the LDS church, his faith for 30 years, needed to be reevaluated in the face of these facts.

> "The problem is that the Church cannot acknowledge any factual errors in the Book of Mormon because the prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed it the 'most correct of any book on Earth' They can't admit that it's not historical. They would feel that there would be a loss of members and loss in confidence in Joseph Smith as a prophet."
>
> Simon G. Southerton – Bedrock of Faith is Jolted, Los Angeles Times, February 2006

Dr. Thomas W. Murphy – Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Edmonds College.

> "In March 2000 Scott Woodward, a professor of microbiology at Brigham Young University, launched a multi-million dollar study … The Molecular Genealogy Research Group (MGRG) compiled a database of DNA records that identified connections between past and present humans.... Some optimism was expressed by church members that such research would vindicate the Book of Mormon as an ancient document.... For those who held such an expectation, the data collected by MGRG and results of similar research projects have been disappointing. So far, DNA has lent no support to the traditional Mormon beliefs about the origins of the Native Americans. Instead, genetic data have confirmed that migrations from Asia are the primary source of American Indian origins." "Now that quantitative scientific methods can indeed test for an Israelite genetic presence in ancient America, we learn instead that virtually all Native Americans can trace their lineages to the Asian migrations between 7,000 and 50,000 years ago. While molecular anthropologists have the technological capability to identify descendants of ancient Hebrews, no traces of such DNA markers have appeared in Central America or elsewhere among Native Americans"
>
> Thomas W. Murphy – Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,
> in American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon, 2002

In collaboration – Thomas W. Murphy and Simon Southerton

> "Investigation of mitochondrial DNA of more than 5,500 living Native Americans reveals that 99.4% can be traced back to Asia primarily via maternal lineages known as A, B, C, D and X. Only 0.6% came from Africa or Europe, most likely after 1492. Lineages A through D are only found in Asia. While the X lineage also is found in Europe and the Middle East, Asian and American lineages have distinctive markers that indicate an ancient separation long before the events described in the Book of Mormon. Similar results from
>
> nearly 1,000 paternal lineages substantiate a Northeast Asian origin of American Indians. Likewise, approximately 99% of the Polynesians surveyed to date can trace their maternal lineages back to Southeast Asia. The other 1% almost certainly came from Europe in the recent past... Folk biological claims of an Israelite ancestry, a curse with a dark skin, and a whitening of dark-skinned Native American and Polynesian Mormons fail to stand up to scrutiny among scientifically literate Latter-day Saints."
>
> Thomas W. Murphy and Simon So – Genetic Research a
> 'Galileo Event' for Mormons, Anthro News, February 2003

Top

Greater than 99% of the DNA lineages of Native Americans are only found among East Asians. The evidence suggests that they share a common ancestor and that American natives did not descend from Israeli lineage.

Jamie Hanis Handy – Brigham Young University, MS Biological Science and Genetics.

> "DNA is definitive. DNA is trusted. DNA is a part of our lives now. There is nothing in which to be afraid. DNA is just information, lots of information…. In my experience, each generation trusts and relies on DNA more than the previous generation, and my children are growing up in a world where DNA just is and has always been a wellspring of reliable information. Anything, any group, or any organization that tries to discredit DNA as a legitimate data source will with each passing year lose credibility with the rising generations. And so I am very, very concerned about the faith that I call my spiritual home. The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter Day Saints.
>
> This quote appears in the newest manual for seminary and institute students, "As an example, you may want to explain that one way modern enemies of the Church attempt to discredit the Book of Mormon is by using DNA evidence to try to discredit any link between Book of Mormon peoples and Native Americans." DNA evidence has had a huge impact on the Mormon narrative. In my lifetime, a one-word change in the introduction to our holy scripture, The Book of Mormon, has had massive ripple effects while yet also remaining mostly undiscussed by the membership at large. Originally the introduction read, 'The Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.' The new introduction reads much the same, but says the Lamanites 'are among the ancestors of the American Indians.'
>
> How has this one word swap changed things? I was taught every week that the Native Americans were the descendents of the Lamanites. I was shown pictures of Mayan and Aztec ruins all the time as if those were evidence of the Book of Mormon civilizations. Once DNA evidence began to show clearly that today's Native Americans did not descend from Middle Eastern Jews (as we originally claimed), everything changed.
>
> And yet, despite this drastic shift, we still insist on publishing something that says "modern enemies" of the church use DNA evidence? … Our children will not see DNA that way. Instead they will see the church as afraid — afraid of the wonder and miracle that understanding DNA is. Afraid that truth cannot withstand study. Afraid that (for many of them) the very thing that brought them to this place, diagnosed their disease, treated their disorder, identified their parent, captured their rapist, freed their friend, gave them a healthy sibling, and that is trusted everywhere cannot be trusted at church?"
>
> Jamie Hanis Handy – DNA and Mormonism, June 2015

DNA Evidence

Top

The international Human Genome Project (1990 – 2003) contributed to our insight of human migratory patterns based on identifiable gene markers contained within DNA. This was of particular interest to the Church for its insight into the origin of Native Americans.

Virtually all mitochondrial DNA lineages found throughout the world can be grouped into less than twenty-five major family groups represented by letters A, B, C and so on. In the case of the native Americans, essentially all of their lineages fall into one of five major families: A, B, C, D and X. Current genetic and paleontological evidence indicates native Americans arrived from Asia. Various groups of early travelers descend into the Americas between 15-35,000 years ago.They crossed the Bearing Straight land bridge between modern day Russia and Alaska during the last ice age.

> "Lying at the intersection of what is today Russia, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan, the region known as the Altai. The Altai region has played a critical role in the peopling of northern Asia as an entry point into Siberia and a possible homeland for ancestral Native Americans. It has an old and rich history because humans have inhabited this area since the Paleolithic. To untangle Altaian genetic histories, we analyzed mtDNA and Y chromosome variation in northern and southern Altaian populations. Based on these data, we noted differences in the origin and population history of Altaian ethnic groups."
>
> "Moreover, high-resolution analysis of Y chromosome haplogroup Q has allowed us to reshape the phylogeny of this branch, making connections between populations of the New World and Old World more apparent and demonstrating that southern Altaians and Native Americans share a recent common ancestor. These results greatly enhance our understanding of the peopling of Siberia and the Americas".
>
> Matthew C. Dulik, et al. -The American Journal of Human Genetics, February 10 2012, vol.90, issue 2, pp.229-246, in association with the University of Pennsylvania and the American Society of Human Genetics.

DNA samples from every known tribe of Native Americans indicate an Asiatic, rather than an Israeli origin.

Distancing from Past Claims

In light of DNA evidence disproving the Hebrew origins of the Native Americans, the [illegible] decided to amend the introduction to the Book of Mormon. The phrase stating that the Lamanites are the "prin[illegible]cestors of the American

Top

introduction to the Book of Mormon. The phrase stating that the Lamanites are the "principal ancestors of the American Indians" was changed in 2006 to now state that the Lamanites are "among the ancestors of the American Indians".

In a further attempt to reconcile the claims of the Book of Mormon with DNA research, the Church published the article Book of Mormon and DNA Studies. The article makes a few interesting statements.

> "Although the primary purpose of the Book of Mormon is more spiritual than historical…"
>
> LDS.org/topics/book-of-mormon-and-dna-studies

Although its purpose may be spiritual, the claim that the Book of Mormon contains the actual history of the Native Americans has always been one of the foundations of the LDS church.

> "The Book of Mormon itself, however, does not claim that the peoples it describes were either the predominant or the exclusive inhabitants of the lands they occupied."
>
> LDS.org/topics/book-of-mormon-and-dna-studies

Both the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith actually do state that the Lamanites/American Indians are the exclusive and predominant inhabitants.

> 2 Nephi 1:9
> "Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; and they shall be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves. And if it so be that they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever."

> "the history of ancient America is unfolded, from its first settlement by a colony that came from the Tower of Babel…The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country."
>
> Joseph Smith – The Went Worth Letter.
> LDS.org/ensign/2002/07/the-wentworth-letter?lang=eng

The essay then states,

> "Nothing is known about the DNA of Book of Mormon peoples"
>
> LDS.org/topics/book-of-mormon-and-dna-studies

This is incorrect. According to the Book of Mormon, the genetic lineage of the Lamanites is exactly known.

> 1Nephi 5:14
> "And it came to pass that my father, Lehi, also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; wherefore he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine."

Who was "Joseph who was sold into Egypt…son of Jacob"? He is the same Joseph who w…n of Jacob who was the

son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham. In Jewish tradition, Abraham is called Avraham Avinu, "Our father Abraham," signifying that he is both the biological ancestor of the Jews and the father of Judaism, the first Jew. As Lehi, being descended from Joseph and Abraham, it indeed gives the Church exact knowledge of the DNA of the Nephites and Lamanites; yet we find no Israelite gene markers in Native American DNA.

> "If it were known with a high degree of certainty that the emigrants described in the Book of Mormon had what might be considered typically Near Eastern DNA [Middle Eastern/Jewish], it is quite possible that their DNA markers did not survive the intervening centuries."
>
> LDS.org/topics/book-of-mormon-and-dna-studies

According to the Book of Mormon, the DNA Studies article is again mistaken.

> 1Nephi 13:30
> "Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren."

In what way is it possible that "their DNA markers did not survive the intervening centuries"? Native Americans did survive. Joseph Smith specifically named the Lamanites as the ancestors of the Native Americans.

> "[The Book of Mormon] records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called the Jaredites and came directly from the Tower of Babel.... The principal nation of the second race fell in battle towards the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country."
>
> Joseph Smith – The Wentworth Letter, March 1, 1842. Ensign July 2002

Considering that Joseph Smith presented a claim to the origin of Native Americans that is evidently not true, and that the Church has recently made attempts to distance itself from that claim, it seems increasingly difficult to feel confident in Joseph's prophetic abilities.

Chapter 12
Reformed Egyptian

Top

The Salt Lake temple Visitors' Center portays the prophet

Mormon as a Mesoamerican native that is dressed in traditional Mayan clothing. It also depicts stylized Mayan hieroglyphs on the walls and papers.

The Church teaches that the civilizations of the Book of Mormon wrote in a language called "reformed Egyptian". This writing system is completely unique to the Book of Mormon people. Issues surrounding the existence of reformed Egyptian include the Church's claims, examples of Native American writings, the Anthon transcript, and the lack of archeological evidence.

The Church's Claims

Mormon 9:32
"And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech."

"Joseph Smith did translate the Book of Mormon from ancient plates of gold, which were written with engraved characters in the reformed Egyptian language."

James E. Faust – The Expanding Inheritance from Joseph Smith
October 1982 General Conference

"A Lamanite is a descendant of one Lehi who left Jerusalem six hundred years before Christ and with his family crossed the mighty deep and landed in America. And Lehi and his family became the ancestors of all of the Indian and Mestizo tribes in North and South and Central America and in the islands of the sea, for in the middle of their history there were those who left America in ships of their making and went to the islands of the sea."

Spencer W. Kimball – April, 1971

Since President Spencer W. Kimball said the Lamanites became the ancestors of all natives in North and South and Central America and in the islands of the sea, we should expect to find reformed Egyptian spanning both continents and all of Polynesia.

Native American Writing

While indigenous groups of the New World used a rich array of languages, formal writing systems did not exist in North America, South America and the Pacific Islands before contact with European explorers and missionaries. North American natives used a series of symbols for crude communication, South American natives used a system of rope knotting only for accounting purposes, and Polynesians used a series of symbols in traditional tattooing was the Mesoamerican civilizations, located in Central America, that were the only cultures to invent and use a ve and detailed writing system.

Top

The earliest inscriptions date to about 900 B.C. and continued in use until the Spanish conquest in the 16th and 17th centuries. Maya texts have survived on stone, bone, shell, pottery, wood, and paper. Since it was the only one formal writing system during the time of the Book of Mormon, Mayan hieroglyphs should be the "reformed Egyptian" written on the Gold Plates. Did Joseph leave any examples of reformed Egyptian to compare?

The Anthon Transcript

Luckily, there exists 3 transcribed examples of reformed Egyptian.

The Anthon Transcript – Copied by Joseph Smith, this is the most extensive transcript of t Plates, taken to Professor Charles Anthon by Martin Harris.

Top

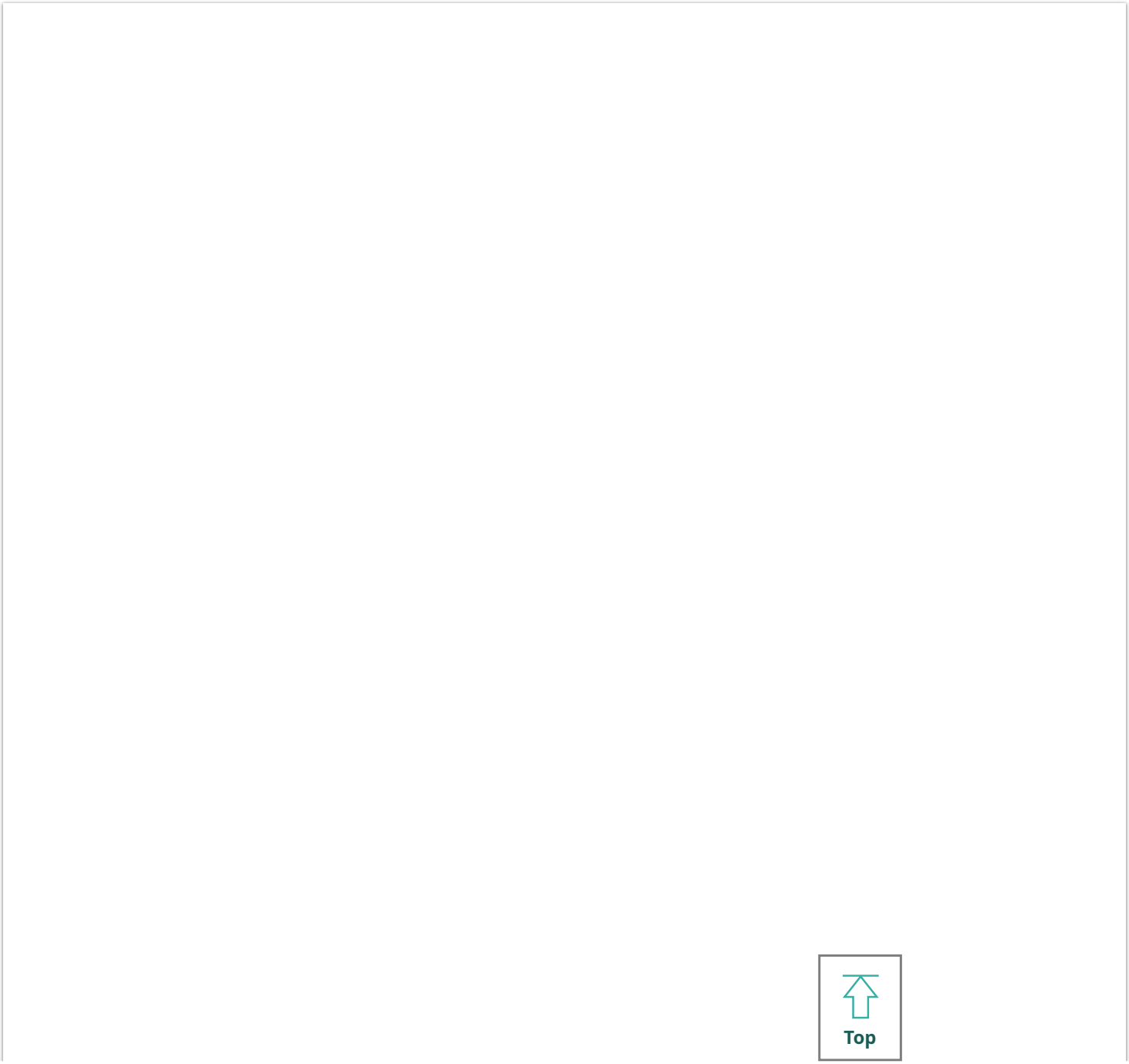
Before Martin Harris was to mortgage his farm to finance the printing of the Book of Mormon, he made an attempt to verify its authenticity. Martin had Joseph transcribe some characters from the Book of Mormon and took it to visit Charles Anthon, professor of classical linguistics at Columbia University. Martin Harris claims to have received verification on the authenticity of the characters (even though no record exists), but when Professor Anthon later learns of Martin's claim, he writes to newspaper editor, E.D. Howe, stating the following,

> "The whole story about my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false. … The farmer [Martin Harris] added, that he had been requested to contribute a sum of money towards the publication of the "golden book,"… So urgent had been these solicitations that he intended selling his farm and handing over the amount received to those who wished to publish the plates. As a last precautionary step, however, he had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper which he brought with him, and which had been given him as a part of the contents of the book, although no translation had been furnished at the time by the young man with the spectacles. On hearing this odd story… I began to regard it as part of a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money, and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues. He requested an opinion from me in writing, which of course I declined giving, and he then took his leave carrying the paper with him."
>
> Professor Charles Anthon – Letter to E.B. Howe, February 17, 1834

Oliver Cowdery – Both Oliver and Fredrick G. Williams copy the same characters of the Book of Mormon.

Top

Fredrick G. Williams – "Characters on the Book of Mormon" taken April 11, 1864.



Top

Since Mayan hieroglyphics were the only formal writing system throughout all of the Americas and Pacific Islands, we should find similarities when comparing them with reformed Egyptian. However, the characters do not appear to bear any resemblance.

Surprisingly, the reformed Egyptian characters contained in the Anthon transcript appear to contain the entire English alphabet and numeric system.

Lack of Evidence

The idea of a reformed Egyptian writing system simply does not hold up to scholarly scrutiny. No formally trained archaeologist, anthropologist, or linguist, not employed by the Church, has ever recognized the characters of reformed Egyptian as a legitimate language and writing system that is backed by evidence.

> "Outside of Mormon scholars, there is not any recognition of or belief in a "reformed egyptian" script or language. The photos of so called "reformed Egyptian" documents that I have seen do not resemble genuine Egyptian scripts of any kind from any period of Egypt's long pharaonic history including both hieroglyphic forms or the more cursive forms known as hieratic and demotic. They look like a modern person's attempt at making cryptogramatic symbols of a modernly invented secret code in that they resemble nonsense "letters" of an alphabet rather than pictorial symbols like hieroglyphs or even the much more varied and differently shaped ligatures of hieratic or demotic Egyptian cursive writing."
>
> Peter Brand – Professor of Ancient History and Egyptology, University of Toronto

The Church claims that Lehi's family used a writing system called 'reformed Egyptian' and after the destruction of the Nephites, the Lamanites are supposed to have taken this system and spread throughout both American continents and the Pacific Islands. Although the many indigenous cultures used rich languages, no formal writing system capable of taking detailed records existed anywhere but in Mesoamerica. Unfortunately, due to the transcriptions we have, reformed Egyptian characters do not resemble Mayan hieroglyphs at all, but actually appear to be stylized En acters.

Top

Chapter 13
Anachronisms

Anachronism- a·nach·ro·nism: an act of attributing a custom, event, or object to a period to which it does not belong.

An anachronism is when an author takes something from their time period and inserts it in a past time period where it doesn't belong. For example, William Shakespeare wrote in his play, Julius Caesar, that Cassius states, "The clock has stricken three." The problem is that the plot takes place in 44 B.C., a time period where mechanical clocks had not yet been invented. Shakespeare took something familiar to him and placed it where it doesn't historically belong. Because the play is fictional, it is simply a mistake. However, if Shakespeare were to claim that he had found an ancient document from 44 B.C. that mentions the action of a mechanical clock, it would clearly be seen as a forgery because of the anachronism.

The Book of Mormon time period covers 2,200 B.C. – 400 A.D., and also contains similar anachronisms.

Non-Indigenous Animals

Elephants

> Ether 9:19
> 19 And they also had horses, and asses, and there were elephants and cureloms and cumoms;

Elephants, mastodons and mammoths evolved from a common ancestor about 10-20 millions years ago. While elephants stayed in Africa and Asia, mastodons and mammoths migrated into America across the Bering Strait during the last Ice Age. Mastodons and mammoths were hunted to extinction during the Pleistocene era, about 11 thousand years ago. While the fossil record shows contact early humans, these animals disappeared thousands of years before any people from the Book of Mormon reach the Americas.

Live Stock

> Ether 9:18

Top

> 18 And also all manner of cattle, of oxen, and cows, and of sheep, and of swine, and of goats, and also many other kinds of animals which were useful for the food of man.

Livestock are domesticated animals raised in an agricultural setting for food. The last known cattle species in the Americas went extinct around the same time as mastodons and mammoths 11 thousands years ago . Although wild big horn sheep, mountain goats and boars are native to some areas in North America, there is no evidence of domesticated sheep, pigs and goats used as livestock anywhere in the Americas. Domestication began with the arrival of relatives of these animals with the Europeans in the 15th century.

Honey Bees

> Ether 2:3
> …did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee; and thus they did carry with them swarms of bees…

There were no honeybees in the Americas before its introduction from Europe in the 15th century. Subspecies were also introduced from Italy in 1859, and later from Spain and Portugal.

Horses

> 3 Nephi 3:22
> And it came to pass in the seventeenth year, in the latter end of the year, the proclamation of Lachoneus had gone forth throughout all the face of the land, and they had taken their horses, and their chariots…

Indigenous North American horses were also part of the great extinction of the Pleistocene era. Despite extensive archaeology, not a single bone or tooth from this animal has ever been discovered in the Mesoamerican region. Maya, Aztec and Olmec cultures depicted many native animals in art and ideology but have never depicted a horse on any temples, carvings or paintings.

It would easy for New Englanders to assume that horses have always been part of the American landscape because the Native Americans they encountered rode horses. What was unknown to East coast Americans at that time was that Native Americans had domesticated the feral horses that ran away from the West Coast Spaniards; who in turn, reintroduced horses into the Americas by bringing European

Top

breeds with the arrival of Columbus.

Technology

Wheeled Transport Vehicles

> Alma 20:6
> Now when Lamoni had heard this he caused that his servants should make ready his horses and his chariots.

Used in conjunction with horses were chariots. Chariots have wheels, however the wheel as a technology was not found in ancient America. Like many new things, it was brought over with European settlers. The curator of ethnography at the American Museum of Natural History states,

> "We see that the prevailing mode of land transport in the New World was by human carrier. The wheel was unknown in pre-Columbian times."
> Clark Wissler – The American Indian: An Introduction to the Anthropology of the New World. Oxford University Press

The military and transport advantages would have spread the wheel through the native populations as it did through Europe and Asia. If horses were actually domesticated and wheeled transport was used, Archaeologists would also find chariots throughout the Western Hemisphere, however there has never been a single horse, chariot, or wheeled transport artifact discovered from pre-Columbian America to indicate that chariots ever existed in the New World.

Metallurgy

Metal Working

> 2 Nephi 5:15
> And I did teach my people to build buildings, and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance

Much like the invention of the wheel, the military and infrastructure advantages of steel would have seen widespread adoption in the Americas. Furthermore, mass production of steel weaponry for such

Top

Americas. Furthermore, mass production of steel weaponry for such large-scale wars as depicted in the Book of Mormon, would have required large iron and steel forges. These would have left evidence of slag, remnants of ore and stock piles of steel weaponry. The spreading of this technology, as it provides many significant advantages, would make steel a very common archaeological finding, however there is no evidence of this. There is simply no record of steel or iron having ever been smelted in the New World.

Coins

> "One possible purpose for the inclusion of the Nephite coinage in Alma 11 is to demonstrate the extent of the bribe Zeezrom offered if Amulek…"
>
> Book of MormonStudent Manual, 2009, pp. 184-90

> "How Valuable Were the Nephite Pieces of Money? …the relative value of silver and gold coins under the system set up by Mosiah"
>
> Book of Mormon Student Manual, 1979, p.229

Agricultural food crops were used as the common form of currency, especially cacao. Coinage was not present in the Americas prior to the May 11, 1535 decree of Doña Juana de Castilla, Queen of the Castilla region in Spain, authorizing the minting of silver and copper coins in Mexico. Coinage in the Western Hemisphere during the Book of Mormon time period was unknown. Coins were introduced more than a thousand years after the conclusion of the Book of Mormon.

It is evident that the Church became aware of this discrepancy when it made these revisions with regards to nephite coinage.

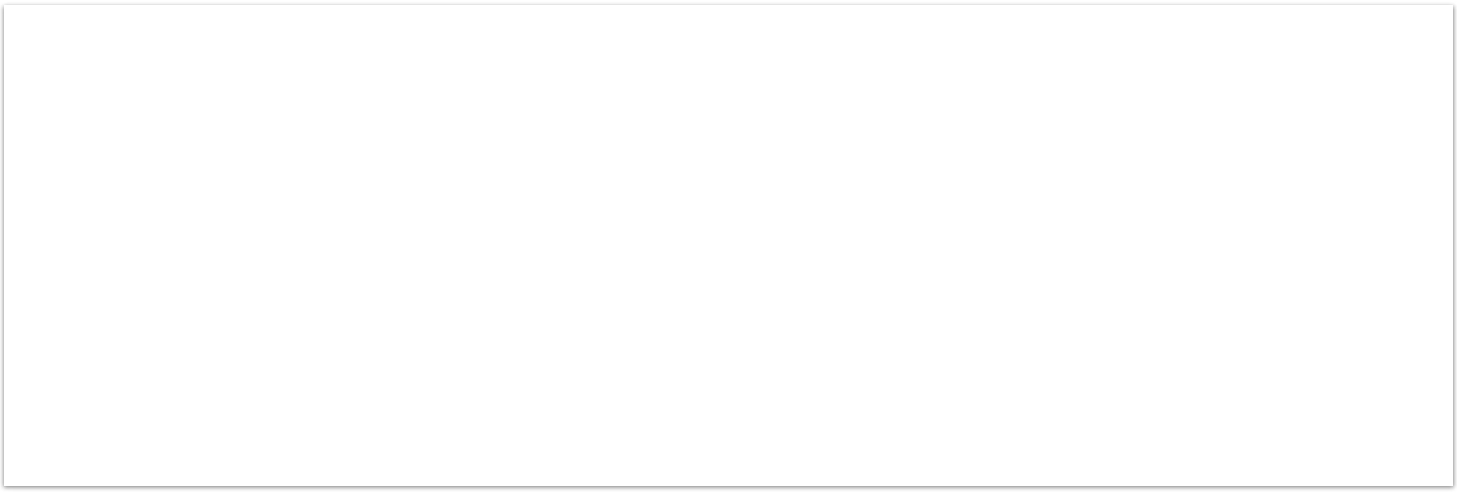
Beginning in 1492, European explorers brought new animals, plants, technology, theology and disease to the Americas, yet many of these items described in the Book of Mormon simply did not exist during its timeline. If Joseph Smith was given the Book of Mormon translation word-for-word by the power of God, then it should not contain these significant errors.

Top

Chapter 14
The Jaredites

The Book of Ether, contained in the Book of Mormon, tells the story of the Jaredites. They were a vast civilization of people who were completely wiped out before the arrival of Lehi and his family to the Promised Land. The Jaredites narrative contains two major issues: first, a year-long oceanic journey to the Americas, and second, a final battle at the Hill Cumorah where millions of people perished.

Year-long Voyage by Sea



This transatlantic journey taken by the Jaredites presents major problems. Let's look at the number of passengers, dimensions of the barges, and the basic necessities needed.

Numbers of Passangers

> Ether 6:14-16
> And Jared had four sons;
>
> And the brother of Jared also begat sons and daughters.
> And the friends of Jared and his brother were in number about twenty and two souls; and they also begat sons and daughters before they came to the promised land.

The plural "sons and daughters" means at least 2 of each. Jared + 4 sons + his brother + his sons and daughters (at least 4) + 22 people + their families. 11 couples that had children before leaving on the trip; assume 4 per family. We are looking at approximately 74 people.

Top

Dimensions of the Barges

> Ether 2:16-17,20
> And the Lord said: Go to work and build, after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brethren, and built barges after the manner in which they had built, according to the instructions of the Lord. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water.
> And they were built after a manner that they were exceedingly tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish.
> And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood.

- Not huge ships – "And they were small…"
- They floated – "…like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water."
- About the "length of a tree" – Ether begins in Babylon, Mesopotamia, or modern-day Hillah, Iraq. Even though most trees average much shorter, the largest indigenous tree in the region is the Date Palm tree (Phoenix dactylifera), which grows 70–75 ft in height.
- Water tight – The bottom, sides and top "were tight like unto a dish."
- Air tight with holes on top and bottom so it would float when upside-down. – "a hole in the top, and also in the bottom"

Basic Necessities Needed

> Ether 3:1, 6:4,11
> And it came to pass that the brother of Jared, now the number of the vessels which had been prepared was eight, went forth unto the mount…
> And it came to pass that when they had prepared all manner of food, that thereby they might subsist upon the water, and also food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them—and it came to pass that when they had done all these things they got aboard of their vessels or barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God.
> And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water.

Drinkable Water

How much water would 74+ people and animals need to survive for 344 days? Divided into 8 barges, that puts almost 10 people per barge. Humans need approx 1 gallon per person per day for consumption and sanitation (www.ready.gov /water). That's about 3,440 gallons per barge. They also brought flocks and herds. There are a minimum of 3 animals to a flock or herd, assume 1 flock and 1 herd per barge. Sheep drink about 1 gallon of water per day and cows drink about 10 gallons. (www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/ansci/livestoc/as1763.pdf) They would drink about 1,032 and 10,320 gallons during the trip. That comes to a total of about 14,792 gallons. Just for comparison's sake, here is a 15,000 gallon tank.

Top

How would they store that much fresh water in a boat that was, at most, 75 feet long? Remember, this was supposed to be 2,500 – 2,200 B.C. and any tossing in the ocean would dump out any pottery, barrels, bowls or animal skinned bags used to contain the water. Any leaks would drown the passengers. That's just water.

Food Storage

Adults need approx. 2,500 calories a day even for a sedentary lifestyle. (Medicalnewstoday.com/articles/219305.php) Today's caloric dense convenient food covers those calories in relatively small portions, but in 2,200 B.C., only very basic foods existed: grains, vegetables, nuts and meat. Larger portions of these foods need to be consumed to meet the daily caloric requirements; about 4 lbs a day. (www.precisionnutrition.com/what-are-your-4-lbs) Ten people in each barge would require about 13,760 lbs of food for the 344 day voyage. Small sheep require about 2 lbs of feed a day and small cows require about 10 lbs of feed a day. (http://www.ag.auburn.edu/~chibale/an16sheepfeeding.pdf) and (http://beef.unl.edu/cattleproduction/ forageconsumed-day) For 10 people, 3 sheep and 3 cows, that makes about 26,144 lbs of food in total. For comparison, that's about 2 adult African elephants. 1 train car worth of water + 2 elephants worth of food do not fit in one 75 ft (at most) barge, that also needed to float and was built with ancient materials and techniques.

Preservation

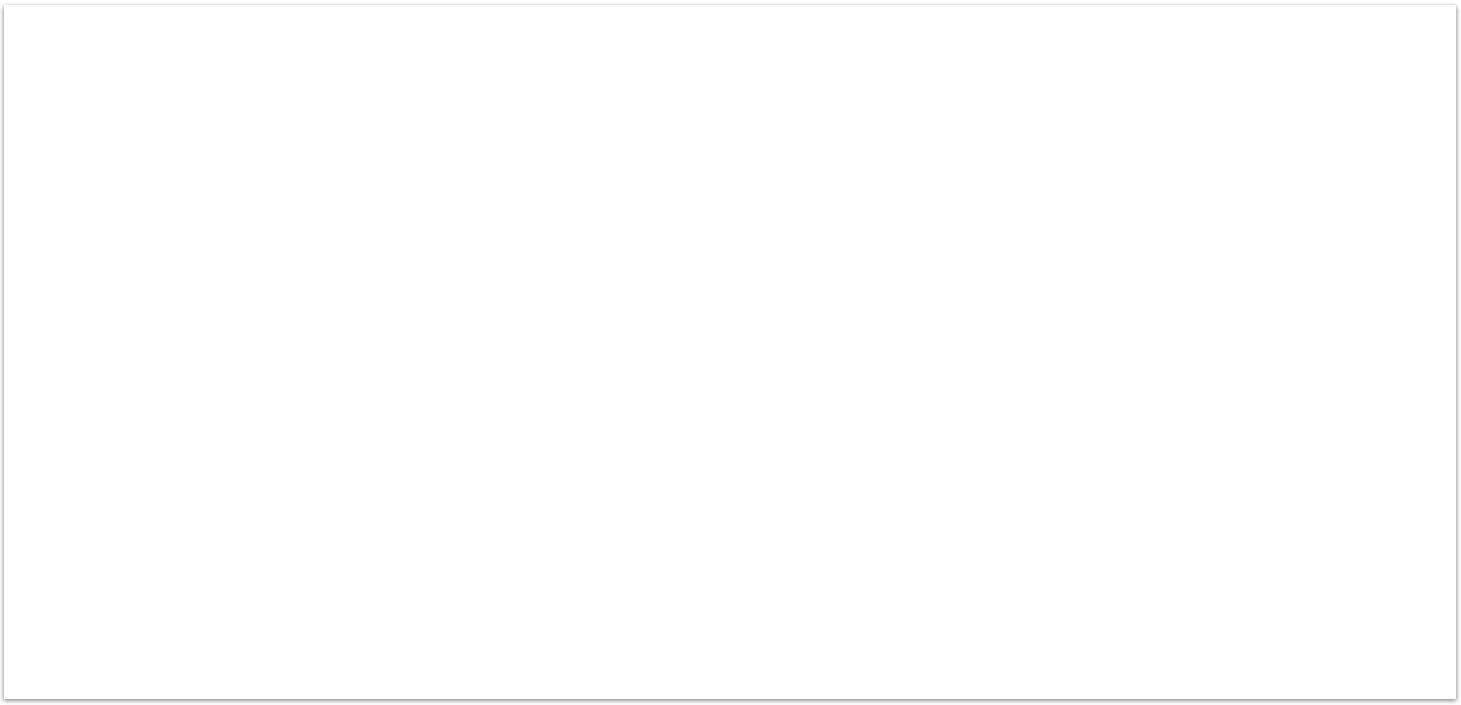
Aside from the enormous space requirements, the lack of refrigeration or ability to make ice inside an enclosed wooden boat becomes the larger issue. Any grains, dried fruits and vegetables would quickly spoil in the dark, humid environment.

Top

Sanitation

The Book of Ether mentions that in addition to their flocks and herds that the Jaredites "did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air … and did carry with them the fish of the waters … and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them." Since additional animals were likely brought along for food, what would happen to a year's worth of butchery and human and animal waste without adequate sanitation? This would guarantee rotting, fecal contamination and the spreading of deadly bacteria and parasites.

Large Scale Military Casualties



In addition to the logistical issues surrounding the trip, the 2nd major problem with the Jaredite story involves large-scale casualties.

> "Cumorah is the hill and area recorded in the Book of Mormon where the Nephites and Lamanites fought a final battle in which the Nephite people were annihilated. Moroni reported that Cumorah was also the site where the Jaredites were earlier destroyed."
>
> The Hill Cumorah – https://history.lds.org/media/40-hill-cumorah?lang=eng#1

The Book of Mormon chronicles two civilization-ending wars: first the Jaredites, then the Nephites.

The Jaredites

> Ether 15, chapter heading.
> "Millions of the Jaredites are slain in battle—Shiz and Coriantumr assemble all the people to mortal combat—The Spirit of the Lord ceases to strive with them—The Jaredite nation is utterly destroyed…"

The Nephites

> Mormon 6, chapter heading.
> "The Nephites gather to the land of Cumorah for the final battles—Mormon h sacred records in the

Top

hill Cumorah—The Lamanites are victorious, and the Nephite nation is destroyed—Hundreds of thousands are slain with the sword. About A.D. 385."

Both great battles took place on the same Hill Cumoroh near Joseph Smith's home in upstate New York.

"The great and last battle, in which several hundred thousand Nephites perished was on the hill Cumorah, the same hill from which the plates were taken by Joseph Smith"

Orson Pratt – Journal of Discourses, February 11, 1872, vol. 14, p. 331

"In our era, the Hill Cumorah is a drumlin hill between the towns of Palmyra and Manchester, New York, where the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, deposited by an ancient religious leader in a stone box, was unearthed, translated by the American Prophet, Joseph Smith Jr., and published in 1830. In 1928 the LDS Church purchased the site and in 1935 erected a monument commemorating the visit of the Angel Moroni. Later, the Church built a visitors center at the base of the hill. Since 1937, the Church has produced the annual outdoor Cumorah Pagent. This image looking southwest a century ago, was taken when the hill was less wooded than today.

The Hill Cumorah – History.lds.org/media/40-hill-cumorah?lang=eng#1

The last Nephite battle had casualties in the hundreds of thousands as recently as 385 A.D., only 1,630 years ago. But the largest battle, in Ether, recounts casualties of at least 2 million people. For perspective, this is an image of 1.6 million people at a meeting in Nigeria to address global poverty. In contrast, the Hill Cumorah near Palmyra, New York occupies less than half a square mile and is only 110 feet tall. This tiny hill is supposed to contain the bodies, weapons and armor of nearly 3 million soldiers, yet to this day not a single remain has ever been found. Does that seem possible?

Top

Dr. John E. Clark, professor of Archaeology at BYU, comments on the Book of Mormon's archaeological remains in the Hill Cumorah.

> "If any place merits archaeological attention, it is Cumorah. The very word elicits a series of empirical questions that can only be addressed through archaeology. When we pay attention to time and to cultural context, it becomes clear that the events described in the Book of Mormon did not occur in New York. In accord with these general observations about New York and Pennsylvania, we come to our principal object — the Hill Cumorah. Archaeologically speaking, it is a clean hill. No artifacts, no walls, no trenches, no arrowheads. The area immediately surrounding the hill is similarly clean. Pre-Columbian people did not settle or build here. This is not the place of Mormon's last stand. We must look elsewhere for that hill."
>
> John E. Clark – Archaeology and Cumorah Questions, Journal of Mormon Studies, 2004.
> http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1412&index=15

Dr. Clark admits that the Jaredites were never part of any mass-extinction on the Hill Cumorah. This fact, along with the impossible type of transatlantic voyage as described in the Book of Mormon, both point to the conclusion that the Jaredite story did not occur.

Chapter 15
Source Material

Was Joseph Smith capable of writing the Book of Mormon himself? Could there be other sources for its language, themes, stories and characters? President of the Quorum of the Seventy, Brigham H. Roberts, spoke about Joseph's incredible mind.

> "In light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are found in the 'common knowledge' of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews [published in Palmyra in 1825], it would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is."
>
> B.H. Roberts – Studies of the Book of Mormon, p. 250

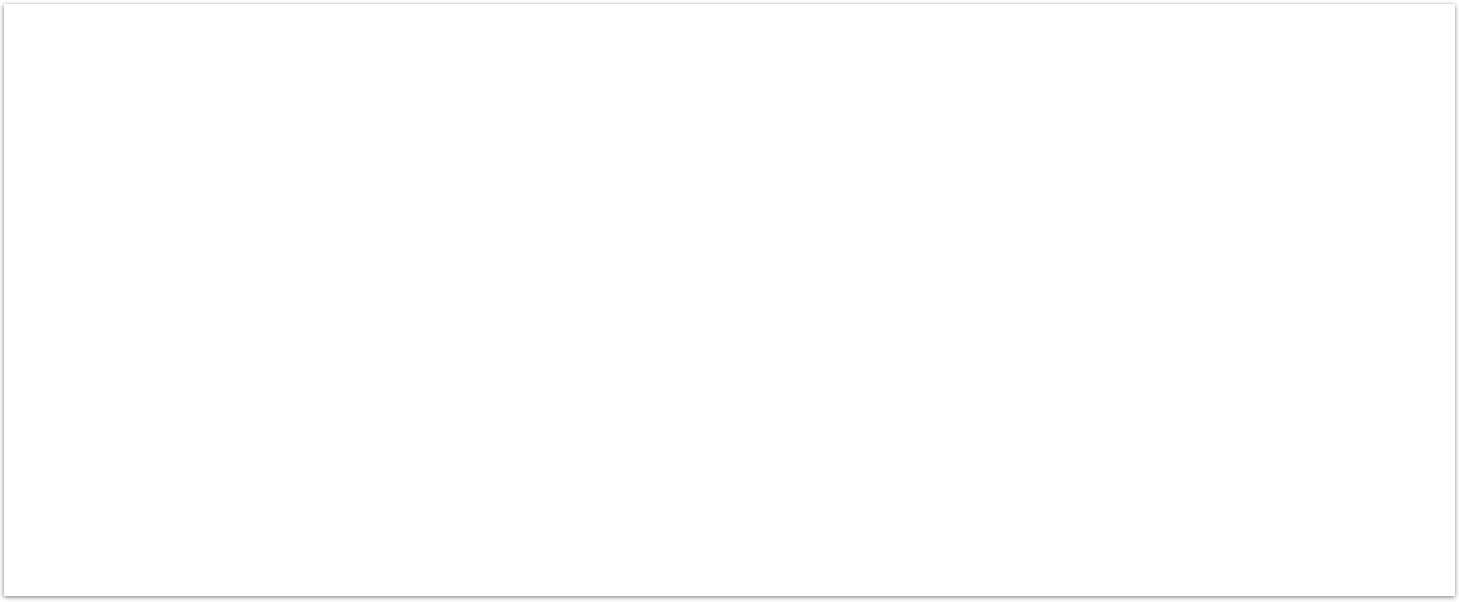
Elder Roberts says that there is "no doubt" that Joseph could have written the Book of Mo[illegible]h influences from a book called, View of the Hebrews, among other contemporary sources. What contemporary sour[illegible] have inspired the stories

Top

of the Book of Mormon?

This chapter examines several of these sources such as: Joseph Senior's dream of The Tree of Life, the book "View of the Hebrews", the book "The Late War", Palmyra's Methodist revival meeting, "The First Book of Napoleon", tales of Captain Kidd, the Apocrypha, and the King James Bible.

The Tree of Life



Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life is among the most well known Book of Mormon stories. From childhood members are taught that a man named Lehi had a dream about a tree, fruit that made you happy, the iron rod and a great and spacious building.

Lehi's Dream

> Nephi 8: 5,9-13,19,20,26,27
> And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me.
>
> And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious field.
> And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.
> And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.
> And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit.
> And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit.
> And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood.
> And I also beheld a strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of i
> And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of th of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

Top

> And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

Joseph Smith Sr.'s Dream

What members are never taught is that Joseph Smith's father was the originator of this dream and that the Smith family was familiar with its story. Shortly after his death, Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote her family's story focusing on her son Joseph Jr. In her book she recounts the dream her husband experienced that was so profound he had to share it with his family.

> "In the meantime we had a son, whom we called Joseph, after his father; he was born December 23, 1805. In 1811, we moved from Royalton, Vermont, to the town of Lebanon, New Hampshire. Soon after arriving here, my husband [Joseph Smith Sr.] received another very singular vision, which I will relate:
>
> "I thought, I was traveling in an open, desolate field, which appeared to be very barren. As I was thus traveling, the thought suddenly came into my mind that I had better stop and reflect upon what I was doing, before I went any further. So I asked myself, 'What motive can I have in traveling here, and what place can this be?' My guide, who was by my side, as before, said, 'This is the desolate world; but travel on.' The road was so broad and barren that I wondered why I should travel in it; for, said I to myself, 'Broad is the road, and wide is the gate that leads to death, and many there be that walk therein; but narrow is the way, and straight is the gate that leads to everlasting' life, and few there be that go in thereat."
>
> "Traveling a short distance farther, I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water, which ran from the east to the west. Of this stream I could see neither the source nor yet the termination; but as far as my eyes could extend I could see a rope running along the bank of it, about as high as a man could reach, and beyond me was a low, but very pleasant valley, in which stood a tree such as I had never seen before. It was exceedingly handsome, insomuch that I looked upon it with wonder and admiration. Its beautiful branches spread themselves somewhat like an umbrella, and it bore a kind of fruit, in shape much like a chestnut bur, and as white as snow, or, if possible whiter. I gazed upon the same with considerable interest, and as I was doing so the burs or shells commenced opening and shedding their particles, or the fruit which they contained, which was of dazzling whiteness. I drew near and began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description. As I was eating, I said in my heart, 'I can not eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they
>
> may partake with me.' Accordingly, I went and brought my family, which consisted of a wife and seven children, and we all commenced eating, and praising God for this blessing. We were exceedingly happy, insomuch that our joy could not easily be expressed."
>
> "While thus engaged, I beheld a spacious building standing opposite the valley which we were in, and it appeared to reach to the very heavens. It was full of doors and windows, and they were filled with people, who were very finely dressed. When these people observed us in the low valley, under the tree, they pointed the finger of scorn at us, and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt. But their contumely we utterly disregarded. I presently turned to my guide, and inquired of him the meaning of the fruit that was so delicious. He told me it was the pure love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of all those who love him, and keep his commandments. He then commanded me to [Top] bring the rest of my children. I told him that we were all there. 'No,' he replied, 'look yonder, you [illegible]o more, and you must bring them also.' Upon raising my eyes, I saw two small children, standing so [illegible]ance off. I immediately

went to them, and brought them to the tree; upon which they commenced eating with the rest, and we all rejoiced together. The more we ate, the more we seemed to desire, until we even got down upon our knees, and scooped it up, eating it by double handfuls. After feasting in this manner a short time, I asked my guide what was the meaning of the spacious building, which I saw. He replied, 'It is Babylon, it is Babylon, and it must fall. The people in the doors and windows are the inhabitants thereof, who scorn and despise the Saints of God because of their humility.' I soon awoke, clapping my hands together for joy."

Lucy Mack Smith – Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, March 2004

Joseph Smith Sr.'s dream is nearly identical with Lehi's vision of the Tree of Life.

Growing up hearing this story surely made Joseph very familiar with it. All it would take to turn his father's story into his own would be the replacing the rope for an iron rod. It is also interesting that Nephi recorded his father's dream in the gold plates much the same way Joseph recorded his father's dream in the Book of Mormon.

View of the Hebrews

In 1823, Rev. Ethan Smith, working as a pastor in Poultney, Vermont, published his book View of the Hebrews. At the time it

Top

was first published, Oliver Cowdery was not only living in Poultney, Vermont, but was also a member of Ethan's Congregation.

After becoming acquainted, Oliver gave Joseph a copy of Ethan's book. Joseph liked it so much that later, as Editor in Chief of the Times and Seasons, he reprinted selections from View of the Hebrews.

> "In order to this, we shall here make an extract from an able work: written exclusively on the subject of the Ten Tribes having come from Asia by the way of Bherings Strait, by the Rev. Ethan Smith, Pultney, Vt." "… an old Indian informed him, that his fathers in this country had not long since, been in the possession of a book, which they had for a long time, carried with them, but having lost the knowledge of reading it, they buried it with an Indian chief."
>
> Joseph Smith – Times and Seasons, vol. 3, 1842, p.813. Quoting View of the Hebrews, p.223

View of the Hebrews became a very popular book in the New England area. Its story begins with the destruction of Jerusalem, much like the Book of Mormon. It also mentions that Native Americans are descended from the Hebrews that traveled to America and that once here, they separated into two factions: one civilized and one savage and bloodthirsty. They also both had with many wars between them. It also quotes heavily from Isaiah, and finally ends with the savage group completely wiping out the civilized group.

Once Joseph finally published the Book of Mormon, President of the Quorum of the Seventy, Brigham H. Roberts, noticed that its pages retold the same story as View of the Hebrews.

This led Elder Roberts to deeply study the connection between the two books. The results of his research were published a book titled, Studies of the Book of Mormon. His book notes many similarities between the two.

Origin of the Inhabitants of North and South America

> "It is often represented by Mormon speakers and writers, that the Book of Mormon was first to represent the American Indians as descendants of the Hebrews, holding that the Book of Mormon is unique in this. The claim is sometimes still ignorantly made."
>
> B.H. Roberts – Studies of the Book of Mormon, p. 323

Prophets and apostles have claimed that the Book of Mormon is unique in presenting the tr of the American Indians as descendents of Hebrews. Elder Roberts notes that View of the Hebrews promoted this sa when it was published in

Top

1823, 7 years before the Book of Mormon.

Destruction of Jerusalem

Roberts notes that the entire first chapter of View of the Hebrews describes the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. He compares this to the first chapters of the Book of Mormon, in which Lehi prophesies of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Hebrews Split into Two Nations: Civilized and Savages

> "Israel brought into this new continent a considerable degree of civilization; and the better part of them long laboured to maintain it. But others fell into the hunting and consequently savage state; whose barbarous hordes invaded their more civilized brethren, and eventually annihilated most of them, and all in these northern regions!"
>
> Ethan Smith – View of the Hebrews,1825

The Book of Mormon story also begins with Lehi and his family arrived in the New World from Jerusalem and splitting into a civilized Nephite nation and a savage Lamanite nation, with the Lamanites eventually wiping out the Nephites.

Stories of a Lost Book

An account is given in View of the Hebrews in which "an old Indian" stated that his ancestors "had a book which they had for a long time preserved," and that eventually "they buried it with an Indian chief." Elder Roberts parallels this with the passing down of the gold plates that were finally buried by Moroni.

Quetzalcoatl

View of the Hebrews discusses the Mexican legend of the "bearded white god" Quetzalcoatl. Elder Roberts questioned,

> "Did this character spoken of in the "View of the Hebrews," published five years before the Book of Mormon, furnish the suggestion of the "Christ" on the "Western Continent?"
>
> B.H.Roberts – Studies of the Book of Mormon

His research discovered many more similarities, including:

- The peopling of America from Israel crossing "many waters."
- Division into two classes. One civil and the other barbaric.

- Civilized people develop a culture of mechanic arts; of written language; of the knowledge and use of iron and other metals; and of navigation.
- The description of extensive military fortifications.
- Long and dismal wars break out between the civilized and barbarous divisions of people.
- The preaching of the gospel in ancient America by prophets.
- Emphasizes and uses much of the material from the prophecies of Isaiah, including whole chapters.
- The future gathering of Israel and restoration of the Ten Lost Tribes.
- Both maintain that the purpose of America in the last days is to gather up the remnants of Israel, bringing them into Christianity, and bringing forth the millennium.
- And many more.

Top

Elder Roberts compared the content of the Book of Mormon with Joseph's environment and upbringing. In doing so he considered popular publications like View of the Hebrews, the King James Bible, the Apocrypha and other contemporary sources available to Joseph and his friends.

> "For years such materials as were then found and discussed, theories as to the origin of the American Indians, including "the ten lost tribes" theory of Hebrew infusion into the American race, together with frequent mention of cultural traits favorable to this supposed Hebrew infusion, all this was matter of common speculation in the literature of America, before the publication of either Priest's American Antiquities or the Book of Mormon."
>
> B.H. Roberts – Studies of the Book of Mormon, p.152

> "Did Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews furnish structural material for Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon? It has been pointed out in these pages that there are many things in the former book that might well have suggested many major things in the other. Not a few things merely, one or two, or half a dozen, but many; and it is this fact that many things of similarity and the cumulative force of them that makes it so serious a menace to Joseph Smith's story of the Book of Mormon's origins."
>
> B.H. Roberts – Studies of the Book of Mormon, p.240

The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain

Joseph likely grew up reading The Late War Between the United States and Great Britian by Gilbert J. Hunt, which was published in New York in 1816. Much like Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews, evidence shows incredible similarities.

The Late War was a Biblical-style account of the War of 1812 and was read in schools throughout the United States under the title, The Historical Reader. Joseph would have been very familiar with this book as he was closely connected to at least 4 teachers. His father, Joseph Smith Sr. was a teacher during the off-season, his wife, Emma, and brother Hyrum were also teachers, and Oliver Cowdery, the Book of Mormon's principal scribe was a teacher.

In October 2013, the Word Tree Foundation conducted an analysis comparing over 100,000 books from the pre-1830's era. They discovered a striking connection between two: The Late War and The Book of Mormon. They noted over 100 rare phrases that bind The Book of Mormon to The Late War; phrases that do not show up in other contemporary books

Both books make mention of battles at forts and rivers, weapons of curious workmanship, 2,000 stripling soldiers, bands of robbers, burning martyrs, righteous vs. savage natives, cataclysmic events,

Top

Christopher Columbus, false prophets, fighting for the cause of liberty, freemen vs. men of the king, metal plates and engravings in brass, and many more.

Top

The War of 1812 concluded only 15 years before the publishing of the Book of Mormon. It was such a prominent and recent event that it made The Late War studied and discussed at great length during Joseph Smith's life.

Revival Meetings

Revivals in early America started becoming popular in the early 1800s; this sensation became known as the Second Great Awakening. Camp-in revivals were organized by every denomination in the New England area and regularly drew thousands of attendants per meeting. These revival camps typically gave farmers, like the Smiths, the opportunity to take a break from their normal schedule and meet with friends and family for a few days of worship. Wooden platforms and towers

Top

were built so speakers could be seen and heard in the large crowds.

The story of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon closely resembles one of these revival meeting held in Palmyra, New York on June 7, 1826, just as Joseph Smith was about to begin his work on the Book of Mormon.

> "I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them"
>
> Joseph Smith – Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History ch.1 v8

The host of this large revival near the Smith's home was Reverend Benjamin G. Paddock, who recorded the events in his memoir. The closing speaker was an aging, well-loved Methodist bishop who was there to give his final sermon. The attendants pitched their tents in a semi-circle facing the tower. The congregation of more than 10,000 heard the ailing Bishop express his love for them and their need of a Savior.

> "The venerable Bishop M'Kendree then visited us for the last time. He was too feeble to preside, and occupied the chair only once or twice, he stated with tearful emotion that he still had great affection for its members, and that to take his final leave of them, so far, at least, as earth was concerned, was the special object of his visit. The spirit of the meeting was admirable. Conversions were numerous and powerful"
>
> Benjamin G. Paddock – Memoir of Rev. Benjamin G. Paddock, 1875, p177-179

King Benjamin's speech in the Book of Mormon seems to bear a resemblance to popular revival meetings that the Smith family regularly attended, especially the one recorded by Rev. Benjamin Paddock.

> Mosiah ch.2
> And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them;
>
> For the multitude being so great that king Benjamin could not teach them all within the walls of the temple, therefore he caused a tower to be erected, that thereby his people might hear the words which he should speak unto them.
> But I am like as yourselves, subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind;
> Behold, I say unto you that because I said unto you that I had spent my days in your service, I do not desire to boast, for I have only been in the service of God.
> And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are; for I am also of the dust. And ye behold that I am old, and am about to yield up this mortal frame to its mother earth.

Could King Benjamin be named after Reverend Banjamin, the host of this revival in New York? Could the circumstances and content of the ailing bishop's final sermon have influenced the events of King Benjamin's speech?

Top

The First Book of Napoleon

Published only twenty years before Book of Mormon, The First Book of Napoleon contains much of the same language, structure and themes. Author, Michael Linning, a Scottish writer for the Queen, published this popular book in 1809, under the pen name Elakim the Scribe. A short excerpt:

Chapter 1:1-3
And behold it came to pass, in these latter days, that an evil spirit arose on the face of the earth, and greatly troubled the sons of men.
And this spirit seized upon, and spread amongst the people who dwell in the land of Gaul.
Now, in this people the fear of the Lord had not been for many generations, and they had become a corrupt and perverse people; and their chief priests, and the nobles of the land, and the learned men thereof, had become wicked in the imagines of their hearts, and in the practices of their lives.

Tales of Captain

Captain William Kidd was a famous British pirate that spent considerable time living in New York. Children in the New England area grew up hearing stories of his many adventures. In 1690 Kidd was living in colonial New York when war between England and France began. He began privateering for Britain (a government sanctioned form of piracy against ships of enemy countries).

After the war Captain Kidd set out on his own and sailed to the Indian Ocean seizing booty from French and Indian trade ships. Kidd used the Comoros islands off the East coast of Africa as his safe haven while he competed with European navies for control of the Indian Ocean trade routes. On the main island, the Grand Comoro, sits the capital port city of Moroni, this provided Kidd with a market for his stolen goods.

Captain Kidd buried caches of g valuables wherever he stopped to keep his treasures safe. he was arrested for the crime of piracy. A small quantity of as found off the coast of Long Island, New York where it w England to be used as

Top

evidence against Kidd. He was later found guilty and hanged.

Stories of Kidd's buried treasures contributed to his popularity in the New York area. People who knew Joseph Smith remember his connection to Captain Kidd. The printer for the first edition of Book of Mormon, Pomroy Tucker, mentions that Joseph "had a library copy of Arabian Nights, stories of Captain Kidd, and a few novels." (Pomeroy Tucker – Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism, 1867)

A Palmyra native and one-time governor of the Utah Territory, Stephen S. Harding, recalled that the gold plates had been discovered by "Joe Smith, who had spent his time for several years in tellin fortunes and digging for hidden treasures, and especially for pots and iron chests of money, supposed to have been buried by Captain Kidd." (Stephen S. Harding – Thomas Gregg, The Prophet of Palmyra, 1890. Cited in Early Mormon Documents, 3:153-4)

Today the spelling of his famous Indian Ocean base, the Comoros Islands, has been standardized, but this has not always been the case. This 1808 map of Africa labels the islands, as they were known in Joseph's time, as Camora.

It all becomes very problematic to learn that Joseph Smith was already familiar with the names Moroni and Cumorah and their connection to buried gold, long before he ever wrote of his First Vision. Being raised with tales of buried treasure and later as a well-known treasure hunter himself, it seems possible that Joseph would name the hill that held golden plates 'Cumorah' and its guardian 'Moroni' because of his association with Captain Kidd.

The Apocrypha

For many years after Jesus' death, leaders of Christian groups would convene councils in attempts to agree on the various written works that were to be considered canon. Eventually, in the 16th Century, the Roman Catholic Church canonized what we know as the Christian Bible today, but also included an additional collection of books written during the space between the Old and New Testaments known as the Apocrypha. Protestants decided to omit the Apocrypha from their Bible, but the King James edition containing the Apocrypha remained in use by Lutheran and Methodist sects.

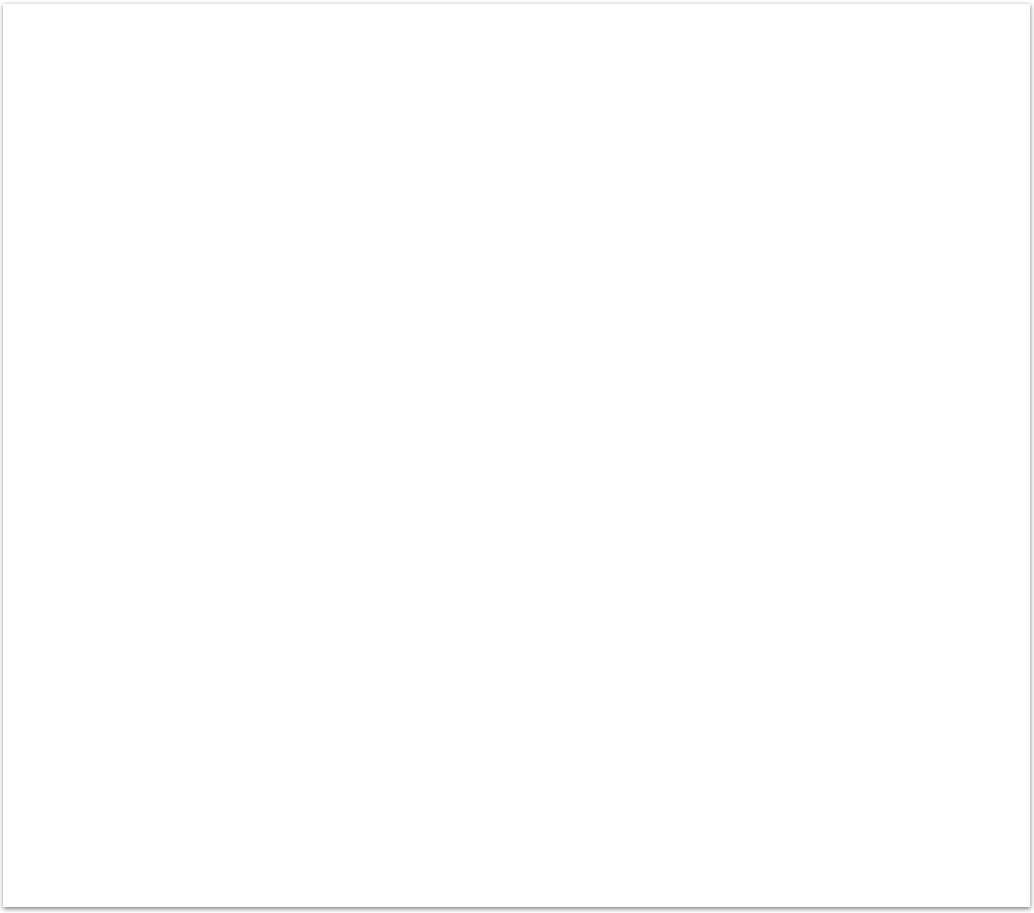
Joseph Smith purchased a Bible that contained the Apocrypha more than 10 years before publishing the Book of Mormon. Church Education System director and historian, Reed C. Durham, states,

> "The Bible used for Joseph Smith's Revision was purchased in E. B. Grandin's Bookstore in Palmyra, New York; on October 8, 1828; it was a large family Bible... It was an edition of the Authorized Version together with the Apocrypha, which was located between the two testaments, and was an 1828 edition, printed in

Top

Cooperstown, New York, by H. and E. Phinney Company."
Dr. Reed C. Durham, A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible, Brigham Young University, 1965, p.25

Much like the other books cited, Joseph's Apocrypha contains many similarities to the Book of Mormon that could be considered source material. Notable similarities include the names Nephi and Laban and the story of Nephi chopping off the head of Laban.



The King James Bible

Lehi and his family carried the 'plates of brass' from Jerusalem to the New World 600 years before the birth of Jesus. Since the brass plates only contained the Old Testament, this prevented the Book of Mormon from having any content from the King James version of the Bible, yet there appears to be three major issues: italicized words, the Gospel of Mark and a long list of borrowed phrases.

Italicized Words

King James sought to produce an official bible for The Church of England, and in 1604 royal scribes began the translation process. They worked on translating the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament from Hebrew and Greek texts. Since the languages didn't translate perfectly the scribes would occasionally insert their own words into the text to make the English more readable. It is easy to find these words in the King James Bible because they are italic[illegible]he purpose of identifying which words were added by the scribes. When the Book of Mormon copies sections fr[illegible]ble, we find these same italicized words that were added by scribes for King James.

Top

Example 1

> Isaiah 9:1
> "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, … and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan. "
>
> 2 Nephi 19:1
> Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, … and afterwards did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan.

Example 2

> Malachi 3:10
> "… and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."
>
> Nephi 24:10
> "… and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

It appears that when the Book of Mormon prophets quote the Old Testament they aren't quoting from the original Hebrew brass plates, but are quoting translation notes by 17th Century scribes only found in the King James Version of the Bible.

Gospel of Mark Addition

The ancient Greek manuscripts used in translating the New Testament into English were missing the end of the Gospel of Mark.

> "[Regarding] Mark 16:9-20. This section is a later addition; the original ending of Mark appears to have been lost. The best and oldest manuscripts of Mark end with ch. 16:8. Two endings were added very early. [A shorter and longer.] The longer addition appears in English
>
> Bibles; its origin is uncertain. It is drawn for the most part from Luke, chapter 24, and from John, chapter 20; there is a possibility that verse 15 may come from Matthew 28:18-20."
>
> The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible, 1948

Much like the italicized words, the ending to the gospel of Mark is another un-divine addition to the Bible, and again we see the Book of Mormon quoting directly from the King James version. If the Book of Mormon prophets only had the brass plates available to them, then portions of the New Testament should not appear in its pages, especially not a part of the New Testament that was only later created to fill-in missing text.

Top

Mark 9:17,18 [uninspired addition]
"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing' it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover".

Mormon 9:24
"And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing' it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover".

Long List of Borrowed Phrases

LIST 1

LIST 2

LIST 3

LIST 4

LIST 5

If the Book of Mormon prophets wrote their words over one thousand years before the translation of the King James Bible, then there should be no appearance of the Bible's translation notes and later additions in the Book of Mormon, but there they are. It is evident that Joseph copied large amounts from his Bible into the Book of Mormon.

Is it possible that a combination of books and stories familiar to Joseph could have been used as source material to create the Book of Mormon?

Chapter 16

Expert Views

LDS and non-LDS scholars agree on the difficulties of Book of Mormon archaeology. Collected below are the views from experts in the fields of Mesoamerican archaeology and anthropology; they include: the National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institution, university professors, and LDS scholars.

National Geographic Society

Top

National Geographic Society,
Aug. 12, 1998
The Book of Mormon is clearly a work of great spiritual power; millions have read and revered its words, first published by Joseph Smith in 1830. Yet Smith's narration is not generally taken as a scientific source for history of the Americas. Archeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere's past, and the Society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon. In fact, students of prehistoric Americas by and large conclude that the New World's earliest inhabitants arrived from Asia via the Bearing Land Bridge. Lower sea levels during ice ages exposed the continental shelf beneath Bering Straight, allowing generations of ancient Siberians to migrate east. National Geographic carried "The First Americans" in its September 1979 issue.

Julie Crain – National Geographic Society

Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of Natural History - Statement Regarding the Book of Mormon
The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no direct connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.

The physical type of the American Indian is basically Mongoloid, being most closely related to that of the peoples of eastern, central and northeast Asia. Archeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the present Indians came into the New World – probably over a land bridge known to have existed in the Bering Straight region during the last Ice Age – in a continuing series of small migrations beginning from about 25,000 to 30,000 years ago.

Present evidence indicates that the first people to reach this continent from the East were the Norsemen who briefly visited the northeastern part of North America (modern day Canada) around AD 1,000 and then settled in Greenland. There is nothing to show that they reached Mexico or Central America.

One of the main lines of evidence supporting the scientific finding that contacts with the Old World civilizations, if indeed they occurred at all, were of very little significance for the development of American Indian civilizations, is the fact that none of the principal Old World domesticated food plants or animals occurred in the New World in pre-Colombian times. American Indians had no wheat, barley, oats, millet, rice, cattle, pigs, chickens, horses, donkeys, camels before 1492. (Camels and a type of early horse were

in the Americas, along with bison, mammoth and mastodon, but all these animals became extinct around 10,000 BC at the time when the early big game hunters spread across the Americas.)

Iron, steel, glass and silk were not used in the New World before 1492. Native copper was worked in various location in pre-Columbian times, but true metallurgy was limited to southern Mexico and the Andean region, where its occurrence in the late prehistoric times involved gold, silver, copper and their alloys, but not iron.

There is a possibility that the spread of cultural traits across the Pacific to Mes[illegible]a and the northwestern coast of South America began several hundred years before the Christian [illegible]wever, any such inter-hemispheric contacts appear to have been the results of accidental voyag[illegible]nating in eastern and southern Asia. It is by no means certain that even such contacts occurre[illegible]he ancient Egyptians,

Top

Hebrews, or other peoples of Western Asia and the Near East.

No reputable Egyptologist or other Specialist on Old World archeology, and no expert on New World prehistory, has discovered or confirmed any relationship between archeological remains in Mexico and archeological remains in Egypt.

Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune stones which have been found in Greenland.

Anthropology Outreach Office
Department of Anthropology
National Museum of National History
MRC 112 Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560

Dr. Michael Coe

Dr. Coe is the foremost authority on New World archaeology. Earning his PhD in anthropology from Harvard University, he is chair emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University. He is Curator Emeritus of the Anthropology collection in the Peabody Museum of Natural History, and has authored over 20 major publications on Mesoamerica.

Dr. Coe was invited to publish his thoughts on Book of Mormon archeology in the LDS scholarly journal, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. He stated:

"Mormon archaeologists over the years have almost unanimously accepted the Book of Mormon as an accurate, historical account of the New World peoples.... Let me now state uncategorically that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained archaeologist, who is not a Mormon, who sees any scientific justification for believing the foregoing to be true, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group. [...] The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has even shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere."

Dr. Michael Coe – Archaeology and the Book of Mormon, Dialogue:
A Journal of Mormon Thought, Summer 1973

University Professors

In 2013, LDS member, Zachary Lien, contacted a number of university professors, experts in their respective fields, and asked them to enlighten him on some of the historical claims of the LDS Church.

Upon research, I found your name as an expert of Mesoamerica.This is why I hope to get a response from you, because you come highly recommended and acclaimed. My question to you would be: What is your opinion is on the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, and the language called "Reformed Egyptian"? I hope you do not feel uncomfortable answering [illegible]e it relates to religious matters. I ask this question in pure curiosity and with a hope to learn. S[illegible]ims from the Book of Mormon are as follows:

Top

- In 600 B.C. a family from Jerusalem sailed to modern day Central America and began a civilization there. This civilization split into two main groups, the Nephites and Lamanites. And after centuries of war, the Lamanites were the last surviving.
- Lamanites are the principal ancestors of the Mayas, Incas, Olmecs, Aztecs and Native Americans.
- Nephites and Lamanites initially spoke Hebrew in Mesoamerica. Over approximately 1,000 years the linguistics evolved into what the Native Americans speak today.

The responses regarding the Book of Mormon are listed below.

Louise Burkhart – Professor in the Anthropology Department at the University at Albany, PhD in Anthropology from Yale University

Dear Zachary
It is true that I am a busy woman, but I can answer your question. I hope that I am not belittling your religion if I say that all historical and archaeological evidence contradicts the Book of Mormon's stories of the peopling of the Americas and the early history of Native American societies. The Book of Mormon is a work of faith, and naturally has credibility to the faithful, but it has no historical basis, any more than the Book of Genesis is a historically or scientifically accurate version of the origin of the earth and human beings, however much it, or the Book of Mormon, may serve as a moral guide to believers. And I'm sure you can understand why people might be uncomfortable directly contradicting the teachings of what has become a very well-established religious movement.

The Americas were peopled by immigrants from Asia probably 15,000 years ago (give or take some thousands; archaeologists still haven't quite figured this out). This is born out by archaeology as well as genetic evidence (DNA, blood types, and other factors). Their descendants settled throughout the entire New World. Complex, urban civilizations developed in Mexico and Central America in isolation from the rest of the world, out of the accumulated knowledge of people who lived there for thousands of years, domesticated corn and other food crops, and learned very well how to live in those environments. Languages of the New World bear no relationship to Hebrew. Ever since Europeans became aware of Native Americans, there have been various attempts to identify them with the socalled "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel" mentioned in the Old Testament. So we might say that Joseph Smith's version was in some degree a variation on this old theme.

David Carrasco – Professor of the Study of Latin America at Harvard Divinity School, PhD in the History of Religions from the University of Chicago

Dear Zachary
I see you are deeply interested in the history of Mexico as it relates to the Book of Mormon. I respect the Mormon religion and have been to Salt Lake City to see the Mormon monuments and displays.

The Book of Mormon is a book of faith and storytelling and not history. Historically it is inaccurate. If we go on archaeological evidence, there is no basis for what the Book of Mormon teaches, as you summarize it below. There is no record of the arrival of anyone from Jerusalem. Here's another point. People of faith believe what they want to believe about the authenticity of their own religion[s]. Catholics believed that St. Tomas, one of Jesus Christ's disciples migrated to Mexico after the crucifi[xion] and preached in Mexico. This is because they found some parallels between Aztec and Maya religion[s] and the Bible. But there is not one single fact, datum, object, word that supports either the Mormon view [or] the Catholic view. My book

Religions of Mesoamerica is coming out again in paperback in September and I address these claims in the first chapter.

Geoffrey Conrad – Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Indiana University, PhD in Anthropology from Harvard University

Thank you for your message. I should begin by saying that while I've written about Mesoamerican archaeology and taught about it for years, it isn't my primary area of specialization. I did most of my own fieldwork in South America and the Caribbean. When I wrote about Mesoamerica, I was collaborating with my colleague Prof. Arthur Demarest (now at Vanderbilt University), whose primary area of expertise is indeed Mesoamerica. When I taught about Mesoamerica, it was always in a course on comparative ancient civilizations. Also, I've never read anything more than snippets of the Book of Mormon and can only discuss the specific claims you've listed below. After saying all of that, I think I do have enough knowledge to assess the claims you've listed. Insofar as I can tell, they are not supported by any archaeological, linguistic, or genetic evidence. Some specific points of disagreement are:

1) Complex societies ("civilizations," for short) began to emerge in Mesoamerica well before 600 B.C.– nearly 1,000 years earlier, in fact. All of the archeological evidence indicates that those complex societies were developed by the native peoples of Mesoamerica out of their own longstanding cultural traditions.
2) The native peoples of Mesoamerica are American Indians. All archaeological and genetic evidence indicates that their ancestors came from northeast Asia (Siberia) and entered what is today the Americas sometime before 13,000 years ago.
3) There were probably several thousand native languages spoken in the Americas when Columbus arrived. They belonged to a number of language families, but none of the ones we know anything about belonged to the Semitic language family, which includes Hebrew. None of the known native languages of the Americas show any evidence of being derived from Hebrew.
4) With the single exception of Norse settlement in what is today Newfoundland, Canada, there is no evidence of any people from Europe or Southwest Asia in the Americas before Columbus. A small number of Norse colonists from Greenland settled in Newfoundland around A.D. 1000. The colony was short-lived, however, and was abandoned within a century. I hope this information is useful to you. I do have two colleagues in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University who are specialists in Mesoamerican archaeology. Both are out of the country this summer, but if they were here, I'm certain they wouldn't say anything different from what I've said.

Geoffrey W. Conrad Professor Emeritus of Anthropology Director Emeritus, Mathers Museum of World Cultures Indiana University Bloomington

John Henderson – Professor of Anthropology at Cornell University, PhD in Anthropology from Yale University.

I haven't seen convincing evidence that a group of Hebrew speakers arrived in Mesoamerica. Language is one area that seems to indicate a negative. Mesoamerican languages clump into a couple of large groupings, but those groupings are very different from one another, and none of them seems related to Hebrew; linguists are sure that there wouldn't be nearly enough time between 600 BC and the Spanish invasion to produce that much variation and obscure a Hebrew ancestry. Of course, I haven't seen a lot of the publications of the LDS church (claims of archaeological confirmation of th of Mormon don't show up in standard archaeological publications).

Top

Arthur Joyce – Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, PhD in Anthropology from Rutgers University

> I don't see evidence of a major migration of outsiders into Mesoamerica around 600 B.C. Archaeologists are able to trace Native American populations back more than 10,000 years ago. There are no indications of Hebrew roots in Native American languages.

William Saturno – Assistant Professor of Archaeology at Boston University, PhD in Anthropology from Harvard.

> University Any attempt to scientifically verify the events of largely religious documents, whether that be Noah's flood or the travels of Lamanites and Nephites is unlikely to produce a result that will appeal to anyone beyond the faithful. That is to say that people will believe what they are most comfortable believing regardless of what scientists illustrate to be the most likely scenario, take global warming as an example. In direct reference to the existence of evidence of Hebrew speaking/descendant populations in the Mesoamerica prior to the arrival of Columbus, there is none. That is to say that following more than a century of dedicated research, not a single shred of evidence (potsherd, seed, or residue) of old world origin has ever been found. This is the case even though some Mormon scholars themselves have been searching for that evidence

Michael Smith – Professor of Anthropology at Arizona State University.

> You are asking about religious interpretations, not scientific interpretations. From a scientific viewpoint, the Book of Mormon has no standing as an accurate or even a relevant source about ancient Mesoamerican history or archaeology. There is no reason to believe that Joseph Smith knew anything about the Mesoamerican past, or to believe that he heard historical truth from God. So I have no opinion about this.
>
> It is often impossible to "test" historical religious accounts against archaeological evidence. The reason is that many people bring strong predispositions to believe the accounts (or to not believe them), and this colors their interpretations. Consider the archaeology of the Old Testament. Did David exist? Did he rule an empire, or build a big palace and temple? Have we found evidence for these things? There is endless argument about this, and the situation will probably never be settled. I assume that you know about the New
>
> World Archaeological Foundation. It is funded by the LDS church for carrying out archaeology in Mesoamerica. The archaeology they do is rigorous and very good. Their technical reports say nothing about the Book of Mormon. But at some level in the church, people are probably interpreting the archaeological results with reference to the Book of Mormon.

Brian Stross – Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley.

> There is little if any support to the historicity claim for the Book of Mormon, ev ding scholarly Mormon investigators, who, like Thomas Lee and John Clark have advanced Mesoa archaeology (without,

Top

however, advancing support of historical propositions in the Book of Mormon.) The Book of Mormon therefore doesn't carry credible historical weight except to persons who take it on faith that it is a sacred book with historical import. The key is that, as with most religions, faith rather than scientific evidence, is what props up beliefs and information given to and propagated by the faithful.

LDS Scholars

Dr. Dee F. Green – Editor of the University Archaeological Society Newsletter, at Brigham Young University

"The first myth we need to eliminate is that Book of Mormon archaeology exists…. If one is to study Book of Mormon archaeology, then one must have a corpus of data with which to deal. We do not. The Book of Mormon is really there so one can have Book of Mormon studies, and archaeology is really there so one can study archaeology, but the two are not wed. At least they are not wed in reality since no Book of Mormon location is known with reference to modern topography. Biblical archaeology can be studied because we do know where Jerusalem and Jericho were and are, but we do not know where Zarahemla and Bountiful (nor any other location for that matter) were or are. It would seem then that a concentration on geography should be the first order of business, but we have already seen that twenty years of such an approach has left us emptyhanded."

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, 1969, pp. 77-78

Thomas Stuart Ferguson – Founded the New World Archaeological Foundation (NAWF)

The NWAF was organized in 1952 for the purpose of supporting archaeological research into pre-Columbian cultures of Mesoamerica. Ferguson convinced then BYU president, Howard S. McDonald, to establish the archeology (now anthropology) department at BYU. While the Church funded the NWAF organization, Thomas Stuart Ferguson organized archaeological fieldwork in the area of Mesoamerica. Towards the end of his career he concluded that the archaeological evidence could not authenticate the Book of Mormon. Ferguson admitted that although the foundation made important contributions to New World archaeology, all his work with regard to the Book of Mormon was in vain. On March 12, 1975 Ferguson participated in a symposium on Book of Mormon geography. He details "the big weak spots" involved in archaeologically authenticating the Book of Mormon. To Ferguson the four most exacting tests were the existence of appropriate plant life, animal life, metals, and scripts.

"Evidence of the foregoing animals has not appeared in any form — ceramic representations, bones or skeletal remains, mural art, sculptured art or any other form. The zero score presents a problem that will not go away with the ignoring of it. The absence of such evidence … is distressing and significant, in my view…. I'm afraid that up to this point, I must agree with Dee Green, who has told us that to date there is no Book of Mormon geography."

Thomas S. Ferguson – Written Symposium on Book-of-Mormon Geography: Response of Thomas S. Ferguson

"…you can't set Book of Mormon geography down anywhere because it is fi nd will never meet the requirements of the dirt-archeology."

Top

Thomas Stuart Ferguson – Letter to Mr. & Mrs. H.W. Lawrence, February 20, 1978

Dr. Ray T. Matheny – Professor of Anthropology at BYU

After working in Mesoamerican archaeology for 22 years, Dr. Matheny admitted that he has a difficult time reconciling the lack of evidence.

> "If I were doing this cold like John Carlson is here, I would say in evaluating the Book of Mormon that it had no place in the New World whatsoever. I would have to look for the place of the Book of Mormon events to have taken place in the Old World. It just doesn't seem to fit anything that he has been taught in his discipline, nor I in my discipline in anthropology, history; there seems to be no place for it. It seems misplaced. It seems like there are anachronisms. It seems like the items are out of time and place, and trying to put them into the New World. And I think there's a great difficulty here for we Mormons in understanding what this book is all about."
>
> Ray T. Matheny – Book of Mormon Archeology, Sunstone Symposium, August 25, 1984

Dr. John E. Clark – Professor of Archaeology at BYU

> "In accord with these general observations about New York and Pennsylvania, we come to our principal object—the, Hill Cumorah Archaeologically speaking, it is a clean hill. No artifacts, no walls, no trenches, no arrowheads. The area immediately surrounding the hill is similarly clean. Pre- Columbian people did not settle or build here. This is not the place of Mormon's last stand. We must look elsewhere for that hill."
>
> John E. Clark – Archaeology and Cumorah Questions, Journal of Mormon Studies, 2004
> http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/ ?pub=1412&index=15

Why do LDS and non-LDS archaeologists take such a poor view of the Book of Mormon? Perhaps because the book's historical claims have not withstood the scrutiny of archaeology, biology, history and linguistics.

Context

Members have been taught to see the Book of Mormon as a true record of the history of ancient America, yet under close inspection it does not appear to support that claim.

1. DNA evidence disproves the Hebrew origins of the Native Americans.
2. Reformed Egyptian characters bare no resemblance to Mayan hieroglyphs, but appear to be a stylized English alphabet and numeric system.
3. Modern animals, technology and metallurgy have been mistakenly inserted into the past.
4. The Jaredite transatlantic voyage could not have taken place.
5. The remains of millions of soldiers are no where to be found on the Hill Cumorah.
6. Several sources for the Book of Mormon show unquestionable similarities.
7. LDS and academic scholars agree that the Book of Mormon is not historically accurate.

Top

The events surrounding the creation of the Book of Mormon seem to point to Joseph's folk magic roots, its content greatly reflects other sources, and its purpose may very well hint at Joseph's treasure hunting past.

PART 3

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

"On 3 July 1835 a man named Michael Chandler brought four Egyptian mummies and several papyrus scrolls of ancient Egyptian writings to Kirtland, Ohio. The mummies and papyri had been discovered

[excavated] in Egypt several years earlier by Antonio Lebolo. Kirtland was one of many stops in the eastern United States for Chandler's mummy exhibition. Chandler was offering the mummies and rolls of papyrus for sale and, at the urging of the Prophet Joseph Smith, several members of the Church donated money to purchase them. In a statement dated 5 July 1835, Joseph Smith, declaring the importance of these ancient Egyptian writings, recorded: "I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham."

Doctrine and Church History – Seminary Teacher Manual, 2013,
Lesson 152: The Coming Forth of the Pearl of Great Price

Top

After Joseph Smith's death, the Egyptian artifacts were passed from his mother,Lucy, to Emma and son, Joseph Smith III. The mummies and papyri were sold to the St. Louis Museum. The museum closed in 1863 and its collection moved to the Chicago Museum, which was destroyed in The Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Many recovered artifacts were dispersed throughout the country. Remaining papyri made their way to the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art; and in 1966 were discovered in the museum archives. After being contacted, the Church purchased these pieces back from the Metropolitan. The Church now possesses original papyri labeled "Facsimile 1" and "Joseph Smith Papyri 2-8."

The Book of Abraham is the result of Joseph Smith's interpretation of the hieroglyphics contained on these papyri. It is regarded as a book of scripture written by the hand of Abraham about his life and visions of the creation and pre-mortal life. The book also contains 3 facsimiles drawn by Abraham and Joseph Smith's interpretation of their imagery.
These papyri have been studied by modern Egyptologists and have been determined to be a collection of documents known as "the Book of the Dead," which are traditionally placed with the deceased to aid in their transition into the afterlife. The hieroglyphics identify the deceased as Hor; likely one of the mummies sold to Joseph Smith. Presented here are several issues regarding each facsimile and the translation of the hieroglyphics.

Chapter 17
The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone is a large ancient Egyptian tablet inscribed with a decree issued by King Ptolemy V at Memphis, Egypt in 196 BC. The same decree appears in three different scripts: Egyptian hieroglyphs,

Demotic, and Ancient Greek. After its discovery in 1799, the Rosetta Stone provided the key to decode ancient Egyptian text.

Background

During the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt in 1799, French soldier Pierre-François Bouchard discovered the stone near Rosetta, Egypt in the Nile delta. As the first Ancient Egyptian multilingual text recovered in modern time, the Rosetta Stone had potential to decipher, up to this point, an indecipherable ancient language. In 1822, Scholar and founder of Egyptology, Jean-François Champollion, announced the complete translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Access To The Translation

Top

Before it became illegal, Egyptian antiquities excavator Antonio Lebolo removed eleven mummies with accompanying papyri from Thebes, Egypt. The mummies made their way to Salesman Michael Chandler in New York where they became the first Egyptian artifacts in America. Chandler traveled to Philadelphia before Kirtland, Ohio looking for buyers, when he met Joseph Smith in 1835. Joseph urged the Kirtland members of the Church to donate for the purchase of Chandler's remaining unsold artifacts. Joseph didn't know that a translation of Ancient Egyptian was completed only years earlier in France when he set out to translate the papyri himself.

Was Joseph able to decipher the hieroglyphics? Luckily, he kept detailed records of his struggles with the translation process. The Church has made his notebooks available as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers 1-10. The result of his efforts are recorded in Facsimiles 1-3 and the Book of Abraham.

Chapter 18
Facsimile #1

Facsimile #1 has two major issues: first, Joseph incorrectly filled-in the missing portion of papyrus, and second, Joseph's interpretation of the image appears to be incorrect.

Missing Portion of Papyrus

This image at left shows the actual papyrus from josephsmithpapers.org, which Joseph glued onto a piece of paper and penciled in the missing image. The image at right shows Joseph's filled-in image from the Book of Abraham and is known as Facsimile #1. Shown below are similar Egyptian pictographs containing the missing head.

Top

Common burial artwork depicts Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the afterlife, preparing those recently deceased for their journey beyond. Joseph appears to have incorrectly filled-in the missing portion of the papyri he purchased from Mr. Chandler.

Mistranslations

A number of modern Egyptologists have translated the text of this facsimile, and their conclusions are all in close agreement. The text simply conveys information about the deceased for whom the papyri were created.

Joseph's translation claims the four jars underneath the table represent various idolatrous gods, however similar jars have been found to contain the organs of the deceas e embalming procedure. Lastly, compared to modern translation of the image, Joseph's interpretation of each section significant errors.

Top

Chapter 19
Facsimile #2

A hypocephalus is a small disk-shaped image placed under the heads of the dead by ancient Egyptians from the Later Period onwards. The shape symbolized the eye of Ra and the markings contain images of various deities and excerpts from the Book of the Dead.

Missing Portion of Papyrus

The original papyri was destroyed in the museum during the Great Chicago Fire. The earliest surviving image of Facsimile #2 was copied by Elder Willard Richards. Much like Facsimile #1, Facsimile #2 was also missing a portion of the papyrus and was filled-in to make the image appear complete before printing. At left shows Willard's copy and Joseph's filled-in image at right.

Normally, undamaged hypocephali depict a four ram-headed god as the central figure (as shown in these images of undamaged papyri below) but since the top of this figure in Joseph's papyrus was missing, he filled it in using the head and shoulders from the figure directly above it.

Top

Regarding the central figure in these type of burial documents, Egyptologist Dr. Samuel A.B. Mercer stated,

> It represents the four-headed ram-god, a form of the united spirits of the four elements.
>
> Samuel A.B. Mercer – Joseph Smith as an Interpreter and Translator of Egyptian, Utah Survey, 1913

Additionally, Joseph used parts of other papyri to fill-in the missing portion of Facsimile #2. The boat came from Papyri IV and the missing circular text from Papyri VI.

Chapter 20
Facsimile #3

As with Facsimiles 1 & 2, Facsimile #3 is commonly found as part of a collection of documents referred to as "the Book of the Dead." Evidence suggests that Joseph Smith's interpretation of the characters appear to be incorrect.

Top

Missing Portion of Papyrus

In the Book of Abraham, Joseph interprets Facsimile #3 as Abraham sitting on Pharaoh's throne teaching the court the principles of astronomy. He labels figure 1 as Abraham and figure 2 as Pharaoh. Actually this is Osiris, God of the Underworld, and his goddess wife Isis. The hieroglyphics above each of their heads identify them as such. Additionally, Joseph misidentifies figures 2 and 4 as males when the figures are actually of females.

Show bellow are the similar Egyptian pictographs containing the same scene and the characters

Chapter 21

Top

The Translation

The Church has consistently taught that the original author of the Book of Abraham is Abraham himself. For many years Egyptologists have refuted this claim stating that the actual translation of the papyri does not match the printed text. Covered in this chapter: the original claim, statement by LDS scholar, the recent statement by the Church, and a statement by an Egyptologist regarding the Book of Abraham.

The Original Claim

For nearly 180 years the Church has taught that the Book of Abraham is the result of Joseph Smith's translation of hieroglyphics written by the hand of Abraham.

> The Book of Abraham – Heading
> The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus.
>
> "In a statement dated 5 July 1835, Joseph Smith, declaring the importance of these ancient Egyptian writings, recorded: "I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham."
>
> LDS.org, Pearl of Great Price Student Manual

Statement by LDS Scholar

Michael Dennis Rhodes – Associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.
Rhodes is an Egyptologist who has published a translation of some of the Joseph Smith papyri. In his book, The Hor Book of Breathings:A Translation and Commentary, Rhodes writes:

> "The Hor Book of Breathings is a part of eleven papyri fragments in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art that came to the attention of Dr. Aziz Atiyah in 1966. These fragments, subsequently donated to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1967, came from three separate papyri rolls. Joseph Smith Papyri I, X, and XI are from the Book of Breathings belonging to Hor (Ór), the son of Usiwer (Wsir-wr), which is the subject of this book."

Prof. Rhodes is one of the Mormon scholars that the Church is referring to when it stated,

> "Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham."
>
> LDS.org, Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham, 2014

Statement by Egyptologist

After the Church made the papyri available for public study, Egyptologists have refuted the of Joseph's translation.

Top

Dr. Robert K. Ritner – Professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago and at Yale University:

> "With the Book of Abraham now confirmed as a perhaps well-meaning, but erroneous invention by Joseph Smith, the LDS church may well devote some reflection to the status of the text. The former Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, since 2001 renamed the Community of Christ, avoids this issue by treating the Book of Abraham as speculative writing by Smith, not as a document of historical truth. In this decision they are clearly correct. Despite its in authenticity as a genuine historical narrative, the Book of Abraham remains a valuable witness to early American religious history and to the recourse to ancient texts as sources of modern religious faith and speculation. The book still has its uses and significance, but not for the ancient world of Egypt and Abraham."
>
> Robert K Ritner – "Translation and historicity of the book of Abraham," A Response

The very same papyri that Joseph possessed have been studied by LDS and non-LDS Egyptologists. Both agree that the papyri are The Book of Breathings of Hor, and that the translations make no mention of Abraham.

Recent Statement by the Church

In light of a growing body of opposing evidence, the Church has acknowledged that the original claim to the Book of Abraham is untrue. On July 8, 2014, published on LDS.org, the article, Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham, confirms that the Book of Abraham is, in fact, not a translation of the Egyptian papyri.

> "Some evidence suggests that Joseph studied the characters on the Egyptian papyri and attempted to learn the Egyptian language. His history reports that, in July 1835, he was "continually engaged in translating an alphabet to the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients." This "grammar," as it was called, consisted of columns of hieroglyphic characters followed by English translations recorded in a large notebook by Joseph's scribe, William W. Phelps. Another manuscript, written by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, has Egyptian characters followed by explanations. Neither the rules nor the translations in the grammar book correspond to those recognized by Egyptologists today." "None of the characters on the papyrus fragments mentioned Abraham's name or any of the events recorded in the book of Abraham. Mormon and non-Mormon Egyptologists agree that the characters on the fragments do not match the translation given in the book of Abraham." "Scholars have identified the papyrus fragments as parts of standard funerary texts that were deposited with mummified bodies. These fragments date to between the third century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., long after Abraham lived."
>
> LDS.org Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham, July 8, 2014.

Abraham and the Papyri

Since the Church has now come forward acknowledging that Joseph's translation of the papyri is incorrect, where did he get the idea that the scrolls containing the Book of Abraham in the first place ?

> "The public mind has been excited of late, by reports which have been circulated concerning certain Egyptian mummies and ancient records which were purchased by certain gentlemen of Kirtland, last July. It has been said that the purchasers of these antiquities pretend they have the b Abraham, Abimelech the king of the Philistines, Joseph who was sold into Egypty, &c., &c., for pose of attracting the attention of the multitude, and gulling the unwary…"

Top

The Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star, no.34, vol. XV. Saturday Augus 20, 1853. pp. 549

In an effort to increase sales, Michael Chandler told the saints in Kirtland that the mummies were the bodies of Abraham and Joseph who was sold into Egypt.

Chapter 22

Exp ▶ ws

Collected below are the views from experts in the fields of Egyptology regarding the general claims of the Book of Abraham.

University Professors

Continued from Chapter 16, the remaining responses from university professors regarding the historical claims of the Book of Abraham.

Peter Brand – Professor of Ancient History and Egyptology, PhD in Ancient Egyptian Language and Literature from the University of Toronto

> Hi Zachary. Its good to hear from you and I'm happy to help you out. Just as background I am an Egyptologist and I am also someone who has a close friend and colleague (a historian) who is Mormon but who does not necessarily believe everything the elders tell him. As it happens I suspect that I know, too, who the "notable PhD's" the members of your church are referring to. I am not an expert on LDS but I do understand that there is a longstanding connection with Egyptology based on a papyrus the Church holds. There are two Egyptolologists from Brigham Young University who are also members of the church and who often act to promote and defend the Church's teachings in the academic realm, but with little success in changing minds I suspect. I am not myself a believer and I am highly skeptical of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham. I would also agree with the mainstream Egyptological view that the Joseph Smith Papyrus is simply a Roman era set of Egyptian papyri with various Ancient Egyptian texts including sections of a "Book of the Dead" and another known as the "book of breathing". There is no connection between these texts and any aspect of Christianity or Judaism. Outside of Mormon scholars, there is not any recognition of or belief in a "reformed egyptian" script or language. The photos of so called "reformed Egyptian" documents that I have seen do not resemble genuine Egyptian scripts of any kind from any period of Egypt's long pharaonic history including both hieroglyphic forms or the more cursive forms known as hieratic and demotic. They look like a modern person's attempt at making cryptogramatic symbols of a modernly invented secret code in that they resemble nonsense "letters" of an alphabet rather than pictorial symbols like hieroglyphs or even the much more varied and differently shaped ligatures of hieratic or demotic Egyptian cursive writing.
>
> There is simply no evidence that the Smith Papyri are anything more than n m Egyptologists have identified them as being– namely typical pharaonic funerary papyri from t centuries of pagan civilization in Egypt. Despite years of study at BYU, no one has duplicated S adings" of the papyri

Top

civilization in Egypt. Despite years of study at BYU, no one has duplicated Smith's "readings" of the papyri as the "book of Abraham" which strongly suggests it is a fictional invention of his imagination. This is not necessarily to say that he didn't believe himself what he told to others. Who knows? People are as capable of deceiving themselves as they are of others. A good rule of thumb in judging such matters is that "Extraordinary claims should have extraordinary evidence" so, when they haul up the actual body or capture a live plesiosaurus in Loch Ness in Scotland then I will believe in the Lock Ness Monster. I desperately wanted to believe in it when I was 12 but after reading a 300 page book on it from the library with some fuzzy pictures and invented drawings i came to realize that there was no evidence for such a creature. Sale of antiquities was very common in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Given that– unless you believe it to be a "miracle"– how likely is it that someone like Smith who knew nothing about Egyptology per se, would just happen to buy the "right" papyri that happened to have this "lost book" of scripture? It strikes anyone who does not already believe the truth of it, or who wants to believe the truth of it, as being highly unlikely. Of course, people often want to believe the highly improbable and can be easily swayed to believe in fantastic or miraculous claims. This is often how new religions spread. Simply by being old, religions can often become accepted as being "fact" or "true" in part because so many people have believed them for so long. I hope this helps. Let me know if you have any further questions. Best wishes,Peter Brand.

Salima Ikram – Professor of Egyptology at the American University in Cairo, PhD in Egyptology and Museum Studies from the University of Cambridge.

"The Book of Abraham and Reformed Egyptian: In 1835 Joseph Smith purchased Egyptian papyri from a traveling mummy exhibit and revealed that they were the writings of the prophet of Abraham. Today, these facsimiles have caused considerable controversy. Many Egyptologists have noted that the facsimiles have no bearing on Joseph Smith's translations and are instead common Egyptian funerary texts from the first century B.C."
I echo the sentiments of the Egyptologists. Salima Ikram.

Peter Der Manuelian – Professor of Egyptology and Director, Harvard Semitic Museum, Harvard University. PhD in Egyptology from the University of Chicago.

"Dear Zachary, Thank you for this email. I am one of those who believe that the facsimiles have no bearing on Joseph Smith's translations and are instead common Egyptian funerary texts. I am not personally aware of any professional Egyptologists who feel differently. With best wishes, Peter Manuelian."

Additional Egyptologists

There are many more experts of Egyptology who have studied the authenticity of the Book of Abraham.

Arthur Mace – Assistant Curator for the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

"The Book of Abraham, it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication. Cuts 1 and 3 are inaccurate copies of well known scenes on funeral papyri, and cut 2 is a copy of one of the magical discs which in the late Egyptian period were placed under the heads of mummies. There were about forty of these latter known in museums and they are all very similar in character. Joseph Smith's interpretation of these cuts is a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes' study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man."

Top

A. H. Sayce – Oxford University

> "It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud. The facsimile from the Book of Abraham No. 2 is an ordinary hypocephalus, but the hieroglyphics upon it have been copied so ignorantly that hardly one of them is correct. I need scarcely say that Kolob, &c., are unknown to the Egyptian language. Smith has turned the goddess into a king and Osiris into Abraham."

Flinders Petrie – London University

"They are copies of Egyptian subjects of which I have seen dozens of examples. They are centuries later than Abraham. The attempts to guess a meaning for them in the professed explanations are too absurd to be noticed. It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations."

James H. Breasted – Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago

> It will be seen, then, that if Joseph Smith could read ancient Egyptian writing, his ability to do so had no connection with the decipherment of hieroglyphics by European scholars. The three facsimiles in question represent equipment which will be and has been found in unnumbered thousands of Egyptian graves. The point, then, is that in publishing these facsimiles of Egyptian documents as part of an unique revelation to Abraham, Joseph Smith was attributing to Abraham not three unique documents of which no other copies exist, but was attributing to Abraham a series of documents which were the common property of a whole nation of people who employed them in every human burial, which they prepared. The "problem" is if I accept that the Book of Abraham merely "originated" with the scrolls and is not an actual translation then I also have to try and accept that God and Joseph decided to fool me into believing a true scripture by telling me it was a translation when it was not a translation. I stewed in that "God is an occasional liar for my benefit" paradigm for a few years. Certainly, many LDS folks go through a similar process.
>
> The ultimate cognitive dissonance here is that either God lies to convince me his scripture is true or Joseph lies. I decided that Joseph lied, even if the gospel he promoted is "good," even if the Church has a good
>
> influence on peoples lives, I was not going to believe in a God that lies to me to bolster his claims; therefore, I conclude that Joseph was a fraud. I hope the true believers in the Church understand that folks like me are not against them. I sincerely hope the brethren find a way to navigate this human disaster that maintains many of the positive, unique aspects of LDS culture. They should've started dealing honestly with this issues a hundred years ago. Instead, we received "lying for the lord" for 100 years and now we receive obfuscating for the lord. I suppose I'll call that an improvement, but we deserve better.

Samuel A. B. Mercer – Hibbard collection of Egyptian Reproductions at the Western Theological Seminary

> None of these, either human or divine, who helped in Joseph Smith's translation, had any conception of the most commonplace Egyptian Characters.

At the time of publication of the Book of Abraham, America still had not yet received the Rosetta Stone's translation of ancient Egyptian. Joseph's interpretation was unable to be verified at the time, and no or[illegible]rgue its accuracy.Once Egyptologists had the opportunity to study the papyri,they commented that Joseph's transla[illegible]e incorrect and the Book of Abraham is not what it claims to be. The modern Church has known for decades that thi[illegible]e case, yet has only now quietly admitted to it.

Top

PART 4
THE MODERN CHURCH

Chapter 23
Tithing

The definition and requirements of tithing have varied at different periods. This chapter discusses tithing in the Old Testament, tithing in the early Church, its initial requirement and intended purpose, and the modern interpretation.

Tithing in the Old Testament

Today sacrament meetings and General Conferences continually preach that promised blessings come from faithfully paying our tithing, but is this Old Testament law really applicable today? The scriptural basis for this teaching comes from the book of Malachi in the Old Testament.

> Malachi 3:8,10
>
> Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. …prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

The previous chapters reveal that Malachi wasn't talking to the general membership of the Church when he asked, "Will a man rob God?" but was rebuking the priests who had been collecting money and food to give to the poor, but were keeping it for themselves.

> Malachi 2-3
> And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you
> But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.
> … ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.
> And [the Lord] shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver
> Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, d not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.
> Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have ed thee? In tithes and

Top

offerings.

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

The tithes were already paid; the priests were simply stealing them. Malachi promises them that if they would stop hoarding the offerings and bring all those tithes into the storehouse to be properly distributed among the needy, God would open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so abundant they might never have to fear shortages in the storehouses again.
One thing to consider when the Church applies Old Testament laws to modern standards is that Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses and instituted the higher law. No longer were Christians required to follow Old Testament laws, but were now only to show love and charity to everyone.

Examples of other Old Testament laws that no longer apply.

Acceptable to murder a non-virgin

Deuteronomy 22:13-21 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her. Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate… But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel… Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die.

Acceptable to beat your slave to death

Exodus 21:20-21 When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged. But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money.

Animal sacrifices

Samuel 7:9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord.

No eating pork

Leviticus 11:7 And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

No eating shellfish

Leviticus 11:10-11 And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you.

No eating pawed-animals

Leviticus 11:27 And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on all four, those are unclean unto you.

No mixed-plant gardens

Leviticus 19:19 Ye shall keep my statutes… thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed.

No mixed-fabric clothing

Leviticus 19:19 Ye shall keep my statutes… neither shall a garment mingle[n] and woollen come upon thee.

Top

Mandatory circumcision

> Leviticus 12:2-3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Netting installed around your home

> Deuteronomy 22:8 When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Are members today required to follow the Law of Moses, like the Pharisees, to be approved for a temple recommend? No, because Latter-Day Saints, like all modern Christians, were taught by Christ to not be bound by these archaic rules, but instead to love unconditionally.

If paying tithes to the sons of Levi at the temple was also an Old Testament law, then why is tithing a modern practice? It turns out that the Catholic Church reinstituted the law of tithing over 500 years after Jesus put an end to all Old Testament laws.

> "As the Church expanded and various institutions arose, it became necessary to make laws which would insure the proper and permanent support of the clergy. The payment of tithes was adopted from the Old Law… The earliest positive legislation on the subject seems to be contained in the letter of the bishops assembled at Tours in 567 and the [canons] of the Council of Macon in 585."
> The Catholic Encyclopedia

Since Catholic clergy are forbidden to marry, they did not have families to support and could devote all of their time to religious studies and managing the affairs of the church. It then "became necessary to make laws which would insure the proper and permanent support of the clergy." However, Jesus never taught to pay tithing to any religious institution; in fact, he taught to give directly to those in need.

> Matthew 25:35,36,40
> I was hungry and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison and you came unto me.
>
> Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.

Tithing in the Early Church

On December 7, 1836, Bishop Edward Partridge officially instituted tithing and defined it as 2% of the net worth of each member after deducting debts. This money was to help cover the operating expenses of the Church. It appears to have been adequate for a time. Two years later, when the Church was eight years old, some 15,000 converts had already emigrated from their homes and gathered in Missouri. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were spending all their time dealing with this large flow of immigrants, to the point of not being able to provide for their own families. On May 12th they took the matter before the high council of the Church. Joseph Smith states,

> "Saturday, 12.—President Rigdon and myself attended the High Council for the purpose of presenting for their consideration some business relating to our pecuniary concerns. We stated to the Council our situation, as to maintaining our families, and the relation we now stand in t urch, spending as we have for eight years, our time, talents, and property, in the service of the Ch d being reduced as it were to beggary, and being still detained in the business and service of the it appears necessary

Top

> that something should be done for the support of our families by the Church, or else we must do it by our own labors; and if the Church say to us, "Help yourselves," we will thank them and immediately do so; but if the Church say, "Serve us," some provision must be made for our sustenance."
> History of the Church, vol.3 p.32

What emerged was a guideline of how much members were to contribute money to help maintain the operations of the Church. In July of 1838, Joseph recorded what would later become section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants – The Law of Tithing.

> Doctrine and Covenants Section 119
> 1 Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion,
> 2 For the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church.
> 3 And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people.
> 4 And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.
> 5 Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.
> 6 And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you.
> 7 And this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen.

The Law of Tithing, as presented to the membership of the Church in Section 119, addresses two major points:
1. How much was required to donate. 2. Where the money was to be spent.

Required donation:

"I require all their surplus property"

"one-tenth of all their interest"
"Zion shall be tithed of their surplus"

Surplus – "that which remains when use is satisfied". Interest – "any surplus advantage." (Webstersdictionary1828.com) The words interest and surplus are used as synonyms. According to Joseph Smith Translation Genesis 14:39, "Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need." Abraham gave only a tenth of his surplus; or a tenth from the amount that was more than the amount he needed. It seems apparent that Section 119 intended a full-tithe to be paid from the money left over after expenses are covered.

Where the money was to be spent:

"For the building of the Lord's house"
"For the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood"
"For the debts of the Presidency of the Church"

Notice there is nothing stating that tithing is for the helping of the poor or for humanitarian [illegible]'s because members are also commanded to contribute fast offerings, which are charitable donations in addition to t[illegible]

Top

It fast offerings are for humanitarian aid, then the purpose of tithing is to pay for the costs of managing the Church's affairs. Members are expected to contribute their share of the operational costs of the Church. As with any extra chickens and eggs a pioneer family would not be hard-shipped to give, the original law of tithing made it easy to give. Paying it was never intended to place a large burden on anyone. In the scriptures, God never required his people to pay him first, or to give to the Church before meeting the temporal needs of their families. Then where did this modern idea come from?

Post-Joseph Smith

For three years following Joseph Smith's death many men struggled for control of the Church. Before becoming president of the Church, Brigham Young and the other Twelve Apostles decided to dramatically overhaul Joseph's original tithing requirements. No longer was tithing 10% of the money one had left over after paying expenses, now any new members were required to donate 10% of all of their possessions at the time of baptism, and all members had to pay 10% of their entire income. The Twelve also voted to exempt themselves and the two general bishops of the Church from any future obligation to pay tithing. Tithing donation plummeted after this new requirement. Struggling pioneer families could not afford to give more tithing than they already were.

During this time the United States government passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Although polygamy was already illegal, the act stated that any religious institution involved int eh practice of polygamy were subject to seizure of all property above $50,000. In an effort to save their property the Church voted to discontinue the practice of polygamy.

In addition to these financial hardships, the Church was also facing massive losses in real estate, banking, mining, sugar and investment firms. On top of that, educational and civic responsibilities were also draining the budget. During 1893 the Church started borrowing from outside financial institutions to pay its debts.

The Church was on the brink of bankruptcy and President Lorenzo Snow yielded to another tithing reformation in an effort to meet its liabilities. He cancelled the requirement to give 10% of one's property at baptism and another 10% upon arrival into Salt Lake. From that point on tithing would be limited to 10% of one's annual income according to their ability to pay. (Journal of Mormon History, vol. 20, Utah State University)

Modern Interpretation

After the reformation tithing donation again began to rise. The Church also hired outside financial experts to guide them into more successful investments. Soon the threat of bankruptcy passed as the Church began seeing large returns on their new financial strategies. Today Church-owned businesses help contribute to an annual income that reaches into the tens of billions. Since the Church is no longer struggling to meet its financial obligations, should the requirement of tithing be revisited once again?,

While the requirements have not changed since President Snow's revision, the tone of the leadership has. Let's look at how the brethren viewed tithing in the past and how it's taught today.

Original Teachings

> "If a man has not the means to pay tithing and would if he could, I can fellowship him just as well as if he did."
> Brigham Young, March 13 1860. Mar.13 1860, Office Journal: Book D, p. 54.

> "I may be pardoned, perhaps, if I say here, for the benefit of any who do n the facts, that the law of tithing is a voluntary law; that is, it imposes only a voluntary duty upon the No person's standing

Top

> as a member of the Church is jeopardized because he doesn't pay his tithing.... I want to tell you that, we will be honest with you; we feel that it is the first duty of Latter-day Saints to take care of themselves, and of their poor; and then, if we can extend it to others.... but first look after the members of our own household."
>
> President Joseph F. Smith, General Conference, April 1915.
> https://archive.org/stream/conferencereport1915a/conference report851chur#page/9/mode/1up

Current teachings

> Is there a level of poverty so low that sacrifice should not be expected or a family so destitute that paying tithing should cease to be required? Like the widow, if a destitute family is faced with the decision of paying their tithing or eating, they should pay their tithing.
>
> Elder Lynn G. Robbins. Tithing—a Commandment Even for the Destitute, April 2005 General Conference

> If paying tithing means that you can't pay for water or electricity, pay tithing. If paying tithing means that you can't pay your rent, pay tithing. Even if paying tithing means that you don't have enough money to feed your family, pay tithing.
>
> Elder Aaron L. West, Sacred Transformations, December 2012, Ensign

The difference between statements from early leaders and their sympathy for those in need, compared to modern leadership that requires payment at all costs while your children go hungry, brings tears to my eyes.

At the October 1899 General Conference, President Lorenzo Snow delivered a talk on tithing.

> "I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child who has means shall pay one tenth of their income as a tithing..."
>
> Conference Report, October 1899, p.28.
> http://archive.org/stream/conferencereport1899sa/conferencereport692chur#page/ 28/mode/2up)

Again, the early brethren knew some were so burdened they had no means to pay. However, an edited version of this statement was reprinted in the lesson manual Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow, ch.12: Tithing, a Law For Our Protection and Advancement.

> "I plead with you in the name of the Lord, and I pray that every man, woman and child ... shall pay one tenth of their income as a tithing"
>
> Teachings of Lorenzo Snow manual, p.160. www.lds.org/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-lorenzosnow/chapter-12-tithing-a-law-for-our-protection-and-advancement?lang=eng

The removal of the phrase "who has means" demonstrates that the modern Church is not above misrepresenting the truth to ensure being paid above the individual needs of members. Jesus taught that we should directly help those in need, Joseph taught that tithing was only payable on the surplus income after all other living expenses were covered, other early leaders taught that if a person did not have the ability to pay they did not have to, yet the modern leaders expect to be paid even if it means that the members go hungry.

Top

Chapter 24
Church Spending

Today we are reminded in every meeting and conference to pay tithing, but while we know that a portion is used for the operational expenses of the Church, much of the donations make their way into business investments. According to a 2012 investigative report by the Reuters news agency, the Church receives about $7 billion in tithing revenue each year and several billion from its for-profit business ventures. The lack of financial transparency by the LDS Church has put revenue estimates between $10-20 billion annually.

This chapter covers a small portion of its non-religious business investments.

Non-Religious Business Investments

What are the Church's for-profit business ventures? For a start, they own the largest cattle ranch in the United States, with other large industrial ranches and farms in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and Great Britain. The Church also owns a small media empire, an investment fund, the City Creek Center, investment properties, and more.

City Creek Center

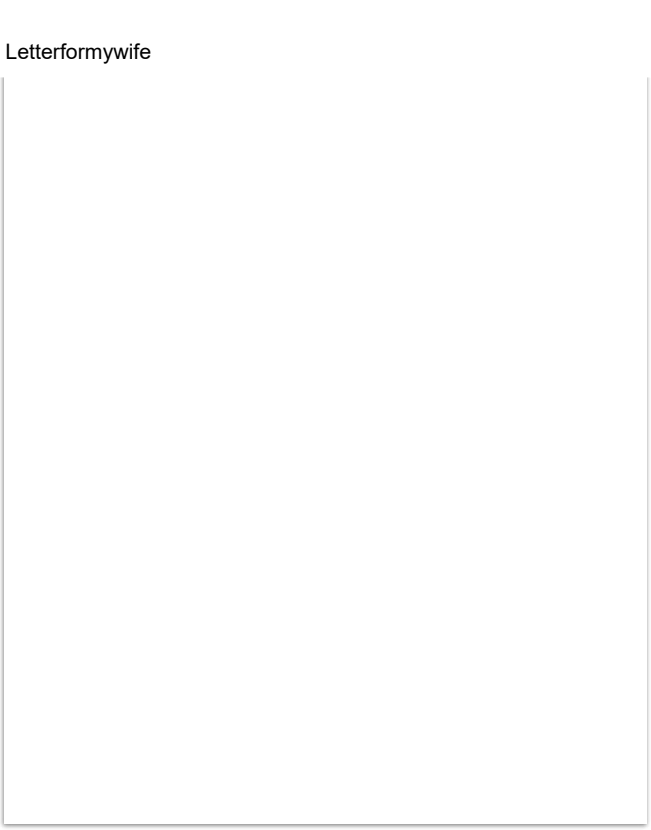
"City Creek Center, a three-block development by City Creek Reserve Inc., a development arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. City Creek Reserve is spending more than $1 million a day on construction, and the project ultimately will cost around $3 billion" (Deseret News – Salt Lake City High Rise is Ready for Occupancy on Main,11/4/2009)

While chapels and temples represent the religious, tax-exempt division of the Church, the City Creek Center is a for-profit business. Even though City Creek generates substantial income, the Church has re-classified it as a 501(C)3:Charitable Organization. Is it fair to classify the City Creek as a charity organization to avoid paying taxes on property income it collects from residential, office space, and retail store leases (such as Nordstrom, Apple, Macy's & Tiffany's&Co)? (http://irs990.charityblossom.org/990T/200912/208152281.pdf)

Downtown Philadelphia

Top

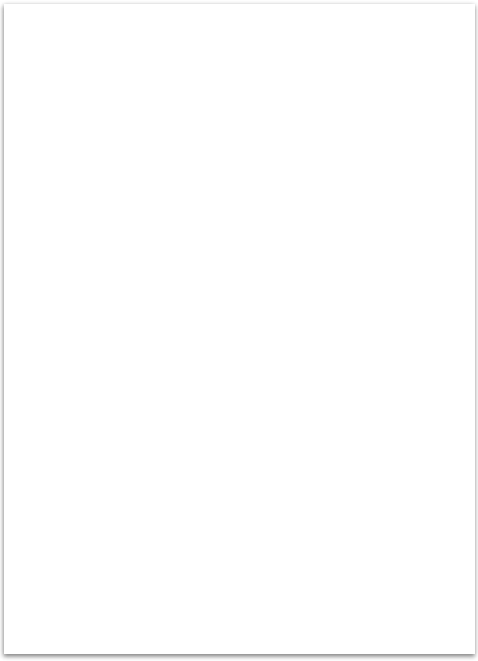
"LDS Church to Develop 32-story Building in Downtown Philadelphia"
PHILADELPHIA — The LDS Church announced the construction of a 32-story City Creek-style mixed-use building in downtown Philadelphia for residential and commercial tenants. The 490,000 squarefoot tower at 1601 Vine Street will include 271 market-rate apartments in the Center City district, a few blocks from the iconic Philadelphia City Hall. (KSL NBC 5 Utah News,2/16/2014)



"Center City Philadelphia 2014- 2018 Developments" Developer: Property Reserve, Inc. [LDS Church subsidiary] Location: 1601 Vine Street Residential Units: 277 Investment: $120 Million Description: The mixed-use development includes a residential apartment tower located at 1601 Vine Street and a separate Meetinghouse for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints at 17th and Vine Streets. The residential tower is a 32-story, new construction building of approximately 489,997sqft and will consist of 264 rental apartments, 13 rental town homes, two levels of below-grade parking providing 238 spaces and 12,000sqft of ground-floor retail. Residential amenities include a swimming pool, fitness center, clubroom and business center. Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York is the project designer, with BLT Architects of Philadelphia serving as associate architect.
https://issuu.com/ccdphila/docs/ccdevelopments2015/28

Downtown Salt Lake City

"111 Main Street Tower Has New Developer"
SALT LAKE CITY — There has been a major change in the development of downtown Salt Lake City's newest proposed office tower. City Creek Reserve, a real estate arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has taken over as developer of the 111 Main Street project. Hamilton, the commercial real estate firm based in Itasca, Ill., had developed 222 Main — the 22-story, $125 million office building located just a block away on the west side of the street. The ground floor of the project will feature retail space, while the upper floors will offer 440,000 rentable square feet of office area with the average floor size consisting of 21,000- square-foot customizable sections, column-free design, floor-to-ceiling glass, with 9-foot ceilings and 16-inch raised floors throughout. DeseretNews, 2/27/2014



Top

Florida Land

"Mormon Church Completes Huge Buy of Land, Now Owns 2 Percent of Florida"
The Mormon church through its subsidiaries now owns nearly 2 percent of Florida with the completion Thursday of a $562 million purchase of more than 382,000 acres in North Florida's Panhandle region. The mega purchase of most of the timberland holdings of realestate developer St. Joe Co. was announced in November. That property combined with Deseret Ranches in Central Florida leaves the Utah-based Church with 678,000 acres in Florida. AgReserves Inc., a taxpaying company of the church, said when the deal was first made public that it will continue to use the North Florida land for timber and agriculture. Deseret Ranches has more than 40,000 cattle and is one of the nation's largest producers of calves.

Orlando Sentinel, 3/6/2014

"Mormon Church Moves to Build a City in Florida"
The Mormon church is going to Disney World. The church-owned Deseret Ranches is going through the bureaucratic process in Florida to win approval to transform rural farmland, used for 65 years to raise cattle, into a metropolis of a half-million residents within a 133,000-acre corner of Osceola County, not far from Orange County, the home of the world-renowned Disney resort in Orlando. According to the Orlando Sentinel, theproject would be the biggest development ever planned in Florida.

Salt Lake Tribune, 7/10/2015

The county only approved such a large purchase when the Church promised to keep the land for farming and timber. After the acquisition. The Church changed the plans to develop the lands for "half a million residents".

Riverton UT

"Riverton sees Mormon Church Daybreak-like Project as 'Crown Jewel"
City Council members voted unanimously for an agreement to develop about 550 acres of what is now open land owned by Suburban Land Reserve, a forprofit real estate arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The plan, adopted after years of discussion, provides for transforming the Hamilton Farm property and adjacent acreage into a massive shopping center, office towers and business nodes as well as nearly 3,800 homes, condominiums and apartments.

Salt Lake Tribune, 2/17/2016

Top

Private Hunting Reserve

"Tending the Flock"
As a full-time missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Clair Huff shed the traditional dark suit, white shirt and tie. For more than two years, he and his wife,Beth, have been serving God in a most unusual way. They operate a private hunting preserve owned by the LDS Church. "Just like the farm derives revenue from harvesting crops, the preserve is designed to produce revenue when hunters harvest the wildlife here," Elder Huff said. The preserve, known as Westlake Farm Commercial Hunting Area, is managed by the LDS Church's Farm Management Co. The for-profit farming and ranching (not intended for Church welfare use) is overseen by the Presiding Bishopric. The church owns thousands of acres of farm and ranch land throughout the West, including the Deseret Land and Livestock Co., a private big-game hunting preserve scattered over 200,000 acres in northern Utah. Hunters from around the country vie for a limited number of elk and moose permits there that cost as much as $8,500 each.

Deseret News, 7/8/2000

Las Colinas TX

"New Las Colinas Apartment Community Sells to Mormon Investment Company"
Apartment builder JPI sold its new Jefferson Las Colinas, 286 unit, six-acre apartment community to Utah-based Property Reserve Inc., a real estate investment and development company owned by the of Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, county deed records show. The terms of the sale were not disclosed, but the property taxes value the community at almost $45 million. The apartment community has been renamed Fountain Pointe Las Colinas on Las Colinas Blvd. just north of Northwest Highway.

Dallas News, 7/25/2016

Ratheon Corporate Campus

"Raytheon's Richardson campus at CityLine sells to real estate arm of Mormon Church"
Raytheon Corp.'s new office campus in Richardson's $1.5 Billion CityLine project has sold. It's been purchased by Property Reserve Inc., a real estate and investment arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Finished in early 2016, the four-story [multi building] office campus houses almost 1,700 workers for Raytheon, the Massachusetts based high-tech and defense manufacturer. The Mormon Church bought [illegible]neon offices from Dallas-based developer KDC.

[illegible]llas News, 8/7/2017

Top

Lake Park Corporate Center

Utah Property Management Associates (UPMA), formerly Zions Securities Corporation, is a subsidiary of Property Reserve Inc., which manages properties owned by The Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. They manage major corporate, residential, and retail spaces along with parking lots and plazas.

Live/Work Environment – Lake Park corporate Center provides employees numerous housing options. From new town homes, class 'A' apartments and single family homes, there is a price point for everyone.

Amenities – Shopping, dining, Cinemark theater, schools and a hotel are all part of the Lake Park Corporate Center experience. Target, Walmart, Kohls, Michaels, PetsMart, Cafe Rio, Chilis, and Starbucks just to name a few are all within minutes down Lake Park Blvd.

Corporate Campus – Some of the world's finest and most recognized corporations call Lake Park Corporate Center their home. Discover Card, United Health Care, Verizon and Intermountain Health Care to name a few.

No other office park campus provides this kind of continuity in a master planned environment.

The Church's for-profit businesses include multiple real estate firms, commercial land holdings, banking institutions, insurance companies, financial advising firms, newspapers, radio stations, cable channels, and many more. Every year billions of tithing dollars are funneled into these businesses for non-religious and non-humanitarian aid purposes.

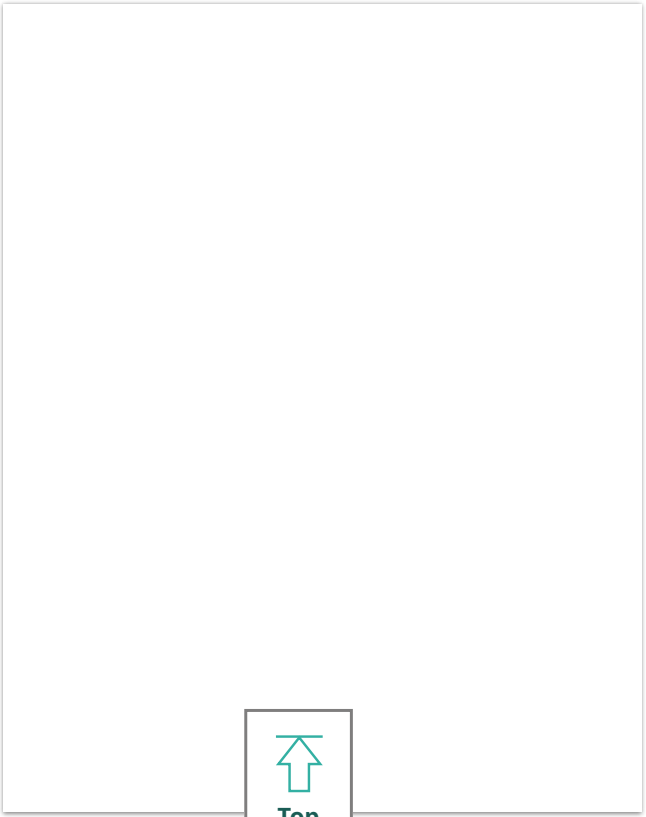
Charitable Donations

Where these funds are not being spent: Between 1985-2011 the Church donated a total of $1.4 billion on humanitarian aid.

This includes international disasters, welfare service missionaries and bishops store houses. www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/welfare/2011-welfare-services-actsheet.pdf The $1.4B figure includes the value of thousands of labor-hours donated by the members in events such as Mormon Helping Hands. While this figure is something to be proud of, we must look at how the LDS Church, that generates double-digit billion-dollar revenue each year, compares to other charitable organizations.

In 2014, The American Red Cross received $2.9 billion in donations and dispersed $2.7 billion in aid and services, the balance covering administration and fundraising expenses. www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=3277#.VxlWWSMrKPQ

The Red Cross donates over 93 cents for every dollar received. In comparison, the Church donates between half and 1 penny



Top

for every dollar received.

The leaders of the Church continually remind us that Jesus Christ himself is at the head, yet we see such a contrast in his teachings compared to the Church's pursuit of money.

> Luke 18:18-23
> And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
> Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.
> And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.
> Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.
> And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

> Matthew 25:35-40
> For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
> Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me.
> Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
> When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and clothed thee?
> Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
> And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

If showing charity for the less fortunate is truly a personal goal, then perhaps members should donate money directly where we feel it will do the most good. Do we really believe that Jesus would require his church to build multi-billion dollar business properties instead of hospitals, homeless shelters and schools?

Chapter 25
Scientific Evidence

Many scientific disciplines such as geology, astronomy, paleontology, and biology, have given us a great deal of information about the nature of the Earth. This chapter briefly discusses the Church's opposing views regarding the age of the Earth, evolution and the existence of death before Adam and Eve.

Top

Age of the Earth and Evolution

Fossils are mainly found in sedimentary rock such as the layers of the Grand Canyon. Sedimentary rock is formed when layers of sediment are deposited on top of one another. Strata can range from less than an inch thick to hundreds of feet thick. The deepest layers were formed first and are the oldest and those on top formed more recently. Geologists use radiometric dating to determine the age of the rock layer in which fossils are found. Due to erosion or tectonic shifting, exposed strata can be seen on canyons, cliffs, mountains, or cutbanks. Each layer represents a certain time period in history. The fossils found in each layer are the plants and animals that lived during that period.

The oldest layers of rock we find on the Earth are about 4 billion years old and are void of any fossilized life. The oldest evidence of life are fossils of single-celled bacteria that are found in rock dating 3.4 billion years old. For nearly the next billion years, fossils show no multicellular life at all.

In rocks dating 580 million years old, beginning the Cambrian era, we finally find the first fossils of multicellular animals. We begin to see very simple organisms like sea sponges and anemones. Around 20 million years later we find simple mollusks and worms. Another 15 million years later the very first vertebrates appear, beginning with small worm-like animals and onto simple fish. In 410 million year old sediment, more familiar jawed fish begin to appear.

The Earth's sediments, up until about 400 million years ago, contain no land animals. The Devonian period marks the arrival the first evidence of insects. For the next 100 million years there are no reptiles, birds or mammals, only amphibians and insects. Plant life during this period only shows the existence of

Top

simple ferns, no seed-bearing plants.

Finally during the Mesozoic era (Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods: 250-65 million years ago) fossils show the rise and fall of the dinosaurs.After the large predators became extinct, the environment allowed for the remaining small animals to flourish. Animals resembling mammals begin to be found about 190 million years ago. The first trees begin to be found in rock layers dating to about 65 million years ago. During this time we also find the emergence of modern birds from small-feathered reptiles.
The "Homo" genus first appeared about 2.8 million years ago, marking the dawning of early humans. About 1.9 million year ago we find skeletal remains in eastern Africa showing fully upright features. Neanderthals began about 300,000 years ago, and by 200,000 years ago, we begin to find anatomically modern human skeletal remains. This marks the arrival of Homo s. sapiens, our current version of spices.

The Original Claims

Evolution

> "It is held by some that Adam was not the first man upon this Earth, and that the original human being was a development from lower orders of the animal creation. These, however, are the theories of men."
>
> First Presidency Statement – "The Origin of Man", 1909

> "I will state frankly and positively that I am opposed to the present biological theories and the doctrine that man has been of the earth for millions of years. I am opposed to the present teachings in relation to the age of the earth, which declare that the earth is millions of years old. Naturally, since I believe in modern revelation, I cannot accept these so-called scientific teachings, for I believe them to be in conflict with the simple and direct word of the Lord that has come to us by divine revelation."
>
> Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, vol.1, pp101-103

> "I say most emphatically, you cannot believe in this theory of the origin of man, and at the same time accept the plan of salvation as set forth by the Lord our God. You must choose the one and reject the other, for they are in direct conflict and there is a gulf separating them which is so great that it cannot be bridged, no matter how much one may try to do so."
>
> Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, v.1, pp141-42

Age of the Earth

Doctrine and Covenants section 77 has a unique Q&A session between Joseph and God. In verse 6 Joseph poses two questions and records two answers.

> Doctrine and Covenants 77: 6
> Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was s[illegible]n the back with seven seals?

Top

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.
Q: What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it is sealed?
A: We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

President Joseph Fielding Smith clarifies the term "temporal existence."

"Here is a definite statement by revelation to us that this Earth will go through 7,000 years of temporal existence. Temporal, by all interpretations, means passing, temporary, or mortal."

Joseph Fielding Smith – Doctrines of Salvation, vol.1, p. 80

Death Before Adam and Eve

"If, for example, a student accepts the untrue theory that death has been present on the earth for scores of thousands or millions of years, he must reject the revealed truth that there was no death either for man or animals or plants or any form of life until some 6000 years ago when Adam fell."

Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary 3:95-96;
Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed., 681

"There was no death in the world for him or for any form of life until after the Fall; that the Fall of Adam brought temporal and spiritual death into the world; that this temporal death passed upon all forms of life, upon man and animal and fish and fowl and plant life."

Bruce R. McConkie, BYU, June 1, 1980

"From the revelations of the Lord we learn that there was no death in this world before the transgression of Adam and Eve."

Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation vol.1, p101

"There was no death upon the earth, either vegetable, insect or animal, prior to the fall of man, and that human life did not exist upon the earth prior to Adam."

Heber J. Grant, 1931 Statement of the First Presidency

Beginning in the oldest layers of rock and continuing up through newer layers, the sequence of fossils shows a consistent pattern to the emerging levels of life. Fossils of simpler organisms are encased in layers of rock that are very old and very deep. Gradually, more complex life is found in younger, shallower layers of rock. This sets the timeline for the evolution of life literally in stone. Life and death occurred on this planet long before human existence. The first sin could not have brought about the physical death of all living things upon the face of the Earth from the creation until the time of Adam.

Distancing From Past Claims

The doctrine of the Church once assured us that the age of the Earth was less than 7,000 years old, that evolution was false, and that no form of death existed in this world before the creation of modern humans, but today the Church has decided to distance itself from those past doctrines.

LDS Scientists Offer A Different Viewpoint

Dr. Michael F. Whiting – Director of the BYU DNA Sequencing Center and professor of Integ ology.

"Many critics of evolution portray evolutionary theory as a series of made-up at require just as much

Top

faith to believe in as any religion requires. In fact, evolution is widely considered to be one of the most successful scientific theories ever proposed because of its ability to elegantly explain a plethora of biological observations."

Dr. Bart Kowallis – BYU Dean of Physical and Math Sciences

"Students and the BYU community are reminded that organic evolution, anthropogenic climate change, radiometric dating and a 4.56 billion year old Earth are all seriously taught on campus by professors who are in good standing with the Church, in fields directly relating to these subjects."

After concluding that its stances on evolution and other scientific subjects were in direct contrast to overwhelming data, again the Church decided to invalidate the statements made by past prophets by taking a more neutral position.

"The Church has no official position on the theory of evolution. Organic evolution, or changes to species' traits over time, is a matter for scientific study. Nothing has been revealed concerning evolution. Though the details of what happened on Earth before Adam and Eve, including how their bodies were created, have not been revealed, our teachings regarding man's origin are clear and come from revelation."

What Does The Church Believe About Evolution? – New Era, 2016

"While it is interesting to note these various theories, officially the Church has not taken a stand on the age of the Earth. Therefore, while Latter Day Saints are commanded to learn truth from many different fields of study an attempt to establish any theory as the official position of the Church is not justifiable."

Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis-2Samuel, CES Religion 301, 2003

Conclusion

My dearest sweetheart, I love you with all my heart. I want you to know that you are the most important thing in the world to me and your love and support mean everything. I know that the love we share in our family is stronger than anything else. I had to write you this letter to explain how I came to the conclusion that the Church is not all it claims to be. Growing up in the Church, I believed in the doctrine, history, organization and culture, and was taught to disregard any information to the contrary. Shortly after reading the journals of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young I began to come across original versions of events that were very different than the lessons I have been taught. Truthful information quickly became my obsession; the real truth, accurate historical facts, not what appears nicely summarized or left out of Sunday School lessons. I know learning about these issues can be difficult; it was hard for me too. Finding out that there was so much that has been kept from of us made me feel confused and betrayed. While I understand there are some good aspects about the Church, I could no longer see how the Church could be true if it has not been truthful. The weight of the whole situation was intense. During this difficult and lonely time, I had to ask myself some hard questions.

If the Church weren't true, would I want to know?
What is more important, the truth or staying in my comfort zone?
With what I now know, would I still believe in the Church if I hadn't been born into it?

Top

After answering these questions honestly, I became at peace with what I felt was the truth. The outcome is certainly not one I expected from the outset. It is not an easy thing for a person to decide to re-examine their own beliefs or accept that they've been wrong. Even though my beliefs have changed, you and I still share the same values such as the importance of family, honesty and integrity. My decision to leave the Church was the product of years of research, study, and prayer, but that was my personal journey, and I support your own journey even if it might be different than mine.

I LOVE YOU

Letter For My Wife © 2019

Top